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Himani Bannerji's paper was first given as a lecture at the Arts Faculty here. She is helping Jadavpur, this time as the York part of a joint York-Jadavpur project in women's studies on Shastri Indo-Canadian support. Jatindra Kumar Nayak has collaborated on an English translation of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* awaiting publication. He is still at Sambalpur. His present collaborator, Himansu Sekhar Mahapatra, teaches English at Berhampore. Yaroslav V. Vassilkov of St. Petersburg's Oriental Institute is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Asiatic Society. As an Indologist he is also known for his ongoing translation of the Mahābhārata into Russian. Anasuya Kumari and Dilip Kumar Das both teach English at Berhampore. Tejwant Singh Gill is still at Guru Nanak Dev University and writing regularly on theory. One of the essays included in Harish Trivedi's book, reviewed by Jaidev, initially appeared in our pages. We wish the research journal of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, the first number of which has been reviewed here by Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta, a long life.

A personal word on the eve of my retirement as editor. It would not have been possible to bring out the annual for so many years without full support from editorial board and cooperation from the other colleagues at the Department. We have been a small team, we are not a big journal either. In my tenure we lost Subir Ray Choudhuri. It was he who also tried most to maintain our bilingual character. There are also older memories in the folds of this journal - of Father Robert Antoine's in particular who had given it a classical temper, of David McCutcheon's whose sense of Europe had widened it, and of Buddhadeva Bose's who had given it its very lease of life. I retire with a mind full of memories.

Amiya Dev

Beyond the Ruling Category to What Actually Happens:

Notes on James Mill's Historiography in *The History of British India*

Himani Bannerji

Our knowledge of [contemporary] society is to a large extent mediated to us by texts of various kinds. The result is an objectified world-in-common vested in texts, coordinates the acts, decisions, policies and plans of large-scale organization.

D.E. Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*

Introduction

Edward Said, very early in a long line of critics of colonial discourse, noted a historical knowledge-power relation encoded in the category the 'east' or the 'Orient'.¹ He drew attention to an essentialist, homogenizing representational apparatus which levelled with its imperial gaze diverse non-European regions into imaginary geographies and vast historic-cultural blocs. One of the interpretive devices that helped to accomplish this task was 'tradition'. The adjective 'traditional' (relatedly underdeveloped, backward, as opposed to 'modern', progressive, advanced or developed) seems to synthesize disparate cultural characteristics to the satisfaction of the West.² Associated with stereotypes of mysticism and spirituality, dowry, wife-burning, female infanticide, overpopulation (sic), primitive technology, peasants and villages, India in particular has been projected as a 'traditional' society. It has long held a binary relationship to the West's self-representation, ramified through its package of science and rationality, technological-economic development, 'open society' and political freedom.³

Deconstructing this traditional 'India' as an ideologically representational category by unpacking the constituent social relations and epistemological method of its production implies an examination of the notion of tradition as a mode of reification. Furthermore, to return this 'imagined India' to the realm of history necessitates its disarticulation from the notion of tradition, which dehistoricizes the cultures of Indian people.⁴ This paper attempts a part of that task by examining the epistemological mechanism, the social relations embedded within that, and the resulting representational character of 'India' as produced by James Mill in *The History of British India* (1817). The importance

of this book in terms of representing India in the West, and also in India itself, is difficult to exaggerate.

Part I: *Text, Rule and Ideology*

Knowing is always *a relation* between knower and known. The knower cannot be collapsed into the known, cannot be eliminated; the knower's presence is always pre-supposed. To know is to always know on some terms, and the paradox of knowing is that we discover in its object the lineaments of what we know already.

D.E. Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power*

We could, I imagine, be easily asked, why ascribe a single text such importance, and what power can conceptual practices have in the creation of hegemony? What, in short, is a written text or epistemology to ruling?

The answer to these questions lies in a Gramscian understanding of the concept of hegemony. According to this, even though force is a fundamental content of hegemony, it does not reside only in physical brutality or a machinery for direct coercion. The initial moment of conquest has to be translated or mediated into an administration of power. The work of intellectuals who interpret the reality to be ruled and inscribe it into suitable categories, provides the administrative basis for a sustained, reproducible ruling (Said 1979).⁵ In the case of India, Orientalist scholar administrators of the East India Company, along with those of the colonial state, provide this conceptual or categorical framework.

On this basis an 'India' is constructed from the standpoint of European/colonial rule. It consists of a set of "virtual realities vested in texts and accomplished in the distinctive practices of reading and writing." (Smith, 1990: 62) The ruling nature of this construction is evident from the fact that it tells us less about the country than about the knowledge imperatives of the producers of that knowledge (Said, 1979: 4-9). The importance of texts which transmit knowledge, especially about "distant amorphous" (Said, 1979: 9) places to the West from whence also colonialism and imperialism spring, must always be kept in mind. They provide the building blocks for cultural and ideological representation of these areas. Socio-cultural relationships between these spaces are conducted mainly through what Smith calls "the textual mode" (Smith, 1990: 61-65, 83-88). Furthermore, these constructed "objects

of knowledge" claim authority for neutral or unbiased representation. No allowance is made for the possibility that the knower's, for example Mill's, location in relations of ruling or intention is implicated in the types of discourse deployed and developed (Smith, 1990: 14-18).⁶

This epistemological erasure of the social entailing occlusiveness, displacement and objectification, is named as ideology by Marx in *The German Ideology*. Here ideology is not solely the *content* or a collection of particular ideas and stereotypes, but also, and mainly, *an epistemological method*. A close reading of *The German Ideology* shows that not only are the "ruling ideas of any age ... the ideas of the ruling class", but also how these ideas are forms and products of social relations necessary for ruling (Marx and Engels, 1973: 5). We begin to see constructive and reflexive relations between the apparatuses of ruling and knowledge.

The ideological method which degrounds and obscures the material dimension of ideas also postulates a superordinate and separate realm for them. In "Ideological Practices of Sociology" Smith transposes Marx's critique of philosophy to the standard knowledge procedures of conventional (bourgeois) sociology and insists that they are neither "objective" (except reificatory) nor "pure" (see Smith, 1990: 14-16, 66-70). The productive tools and impacts of these procedures, when queried on the ground of everyday life, amount to a categorical organization of relations of ruling, involving specific semiotic systems. They are, for her, "isomorphic with relations of ruling", and invert the actual lived subject/object relations. They write over subjectivities, experiences and agencies of peoples in history (Smith, 1990: 83-88).

Smith's Marxist critique of sociology as ideology can be extended to historiography of colonial history. I have chosen James Mill's *The History of British India* for an exploration of processes of knowledge production at work with the intention of uncovering how Mill's 'India', or Inden's "imagined India", is an ideological constellation.

Part II: *Making India British:*

James Mill and Colonial Historiography

It is certain that the few features of which we have any description from the Greeks, bear no inaccurate resemblance to those which are found to distinguish this people at the present day. From this resemblance, from the state of improvement in which the Indians remain, and the stationary condition in which their institutions first, and then their manners and character, have a tendency

to fix them, it is no unreasonable supposition, that they have presented a very uniform appearance during the long interval from the visit of the Greeks to that of the English. Their annals, however, from that era till the period of Mahomedan conquests, are a blank.

James Mill, *The History of British India*

Mill's *The History of British India* has stood in for 'Indian history', even though Mill encapsulates his real project in the very title of the study. The title holds, as does the book, an actuality and an ambition within one cover. India at the time of his writing (1805-17) was not fully under British control, either in terms of occupation or territories or in terms of knowledge. A comprehensive task of creating knowledge for ruling had been already undertaken by the Orientalists in the eighteenth century, but an 'India' equal to the task of colonial rule had not yet been fully formulated. Besides, both in England and India there were many turns and reversals in political philosophy of governing and practical politics. The notion of "British India", therefore, projects both a partial actuality and a desire of full domination, as well as their conceptual basis (Mill, 1968: 118-19). Mill's India is thus an ingested, comprehended social space for colonial rule. The book's towering status as a colonial text is evinced in securing Mill the job of the Chief Examiner of India House, the highest post in England of the most lucrative instrument of colonial rule. Administrators, legislators, missionaries and businessmen engaged with India, among others, read this book as a compulsory text. An important footnote is John Kenneth Galbraith's preface to the 1968 edition (Mill 1968), having read it as American Ambassador to India. His preface abounds in admiration of Mill for giving the modern reader a fundamental grasp on Indian reality.

This preface supports Mill's claim that *The History of British India* would stand as an enduring representation of India for the West. An ideological assessment, then, of this crucial text should be conducted along the following lines:

1. The epistemological method and historical context, including the social positionality of the author;
2. The particular content with regard to ascriptive stereotypes of concepts and images;
3. The overall political implications of these textual/conceptual practices with regard to the type of social subjectivity or historical agency ascribed to the Indian people.

Speaking of context, James Mill is primarily known as the apostle of Bentham's utilitarian philosophy and its application to matters of government. It is less known that in earlier life he was an evangelical preacher, and he remained close to Wilberforce and the Clapham sect. He was admired by William Bentinck, the Governor General of Bengal, and by important parliamentarians such as Thomas Babington Macaulay. For his formulation of "British India" he relied on the archival compilations of the East India Company and translated resources of the Orientalists. But his particular interest, unlike theirs, did not lie in the antiquities, and he successfully ejected parts of the earlier approach which combined a negative cultural-moral judgement of the contemporary society with a respect for India's ancient civilization.

Mill's history project, and thus his historiography, obviously stems from the standpoint of a colonial empire. It is not in 'discovering' India as an historical entity, but in assessing and vindicating the moment of colonial rule, that he found his intellectual motive force. His purpose was to unfold the implications of events which marked the "... commencement of the British intercourse with India; and the Circumstances of its Progress, till the Establishment of the Company on a durable basis of Act of Sixth of Queen Anne" (Mill, 1968: 1). The scope of the three-volume project consists of

... recording the train of events, unfolding the Constitution of the Body, half political, half commercial, through which the business has been ostensibly performed; describing the nature, the progress and effects of its commercial operations, exhibiting the legislative proceedings, the discussions and speculations, to which the connexion of Great Britain with India has given birth, analyzing the schemes of government which she has adopted for her Indian dominions, and attempting to discover the character and species of relation to one another in which the mother country and her eastern dependencies are placed. (Mill, 1968: 2).

The attempt consisted of situating and legitimizing British colonial rule in a pattern of ruling successions in India. Emphasizing force and invasion by foreigners, characterizing the Mughal Empire as foreign rule, and portraying the Mughals as both despotic and a morally degenerative influence on the Hindus, Mill argued for the necessity of establishing an English empire in India. It was as a rule of reason and a civilizing mission that he justified it. Throughout his first chapter, on the English mercantile companies and the foundation of the colonial empire in Bengal, Mill presents an innocent com-

mercial history. All European atrocities of conquest and commerce, including slave trade, are erased while describing mercantile rivalry and expansion and presenting English achievements and superiority in “the spirit of commerce”. The only moral judgement is levelled at the Dutch for executing nine Englishmen in the “massacre at Amboyna”. The Mahomedans, however, attract heavy condemnation on the ground of savagery and ruthlessness, while “... that brilliant empire, established by the English ...” was entirely legitimated in India (Mill, 1968: 33).

A firman and decree of the Emperor, conferring [these] privileges was received on the 11th of January, 1643; and authorized the first establishment of the English on the continent of India, at that time the seat of most extensive and splendid monarchies on the surface of the globe. (Mill, 1968: 21)

The “recording of train of events” was thus no neutral narrative venture for Mill. *The History of British India* had but one main objective, to project and promote British rule in India.

This objective required a representational characterization of the object of rule — namely, Indian peoples. The rest of the three volumes is dedicated to this enterprise, the construction of a definitive version of India, beginning with the most extensive chapter on “manners, morals and customs of the hindoos”. This morally constructive chapter is followed by a temporal history, also laced with moral and cultural judgements. Together they contained both justification and direction for the development of the colonial state.

Mill’s history, consciously eschewing any archival or empirical research, including the knowledge of local classical or vernacular languages and texts, is mainly a cultural and moral narrative. Thus it is not impeded by or accountable to information that may not fit in the introjected moral schema. This historiography pertaining to colonial history is distinct from that of European history, where the historian attempts the role of a neutral observer and a recorder of events in time. In colonial historiography, however, the historian, according to Mill, plays the role of a judge who is faced with a crime and a set of circumstances and testimonies of witnesses. These he must construe as “evidences” of a typical event, as well as decide on the credibility of the witnesses.⁷ He must then first decide that there has been a crime at all, and of what type, and read/hear the testimonies, etc., with the legal provisions pertaining to it. Whether something is an “evidence” at all will depend on what it is an “evidence” of, that is, on the alleged crime itself. The legal discourse of Mill’s historiography in the preface to his text contains explicit epis-

temological statements. Beginning with the premise that he has a full knowledge of 'India' (the crime) before he undertakes his task, he employs logic in selecting and sorting evidences for this pre-conceived knowledge. Thus the text is a fully fleshed construction coherent with his presuppositions. Details are to be read as illustrations of certain preconceptions which originate outside of Indian history, social and cultural organization. They are not derived from, but preceded the historical details. The attempt results into a seamless construction of 'India', unaccommodating of complexities which exist on the ground and might have problematized this constructive roundness.

Mill's proudly stated historiography, which could be termed idealist rationalism, is a version of what was pointed out by Marx as an epistemological method for the construction of ideology. Discrediting the material basis or the socio-historical moment of culture and knowledge, it posits an essential 'real', which is qualitatively different from and unaccountable to the historical-empirical or the 'phenomenal'. Logical deductions and interpretations rely thus on this pre-historical or empirical essential category. Merging thus the formality of logic with metaphysics, Mill claims to provide his reader with the "real truth" about India or the "real India". He never questioned his presumptions about India, their sources, or the existing social relations between a colonial investigator and a colonized reality. Totally un-self-conscious of his ideological position, he characterized his method as that of "positive science". As such he operated with the notions of "true" and "false" causes, "witnesses" and "evidences", to come to the right judgement and representation of India, bypassing the distractions of unfitting details. But in the course of his historical narrative Mill also created cultural essentialist "facts" about India which functioned as metaphysical and foundational categories for classifying, judging and administering Indian peoples and societies. Thus the writing of history becomes a production of ideology, both in the sense of content and method of knowledge production which occludes constructive relationships between consciousness and social organization. Nor can Mill's knowledge of 'India' be self-reflexive on the method of its own generation. Unlike the sciences, it dispenses with verification, with the obligation to test pre-conceptions, etc., against the archival and empirical historical and social. His method precluded any questioning of the premises of his moral deductions, discouraged new research, since he considered that Europe already "knew" India, and thus that a "sufficient stock of knowledge was already there" (Mill, 1968: 5).

The standpoint of social relations of power implicit in this ideological method is evident from the fact that Mill never considers the ability or the right of Indians to define and represent themselves. His text as a whole is both a

device and a justification for that silencing. The only voice and image permitted to the 'native' would be those he/she would acquire in the course of the colonial narrative.

The fear of disturbance to Mill's construction of India as an ideal type emerges in his complex intertextual relationship with the English Orientalists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁸ Since no narrative even remotely resembling the history of India could have been written without using previous records and translations, the Orientalist archive was of great importance to Mill. Though he did not in all points share their view of India, the "lineaments of what they already knew" or had constructed as knowledge provided the pedestal for his project. Rather his strategy of abstraction allowed for the decontextualization and incorporation of previous interpretations, stereotypes and attitudes which agreed with his stance.

The interpretive device that indebted Mill to the Orientalists and provided a staple for producing an ideological knowledge of India was the polyvalent concept of tradition. It is this grab-bag category of cultural representation which provided the modality of constructing 'difference'. It created a ground for essentialism, universalization and generalization, since everything found in or about India could thus be read in the light of this pre-established concept. The peculiar relationship held by this concept to time and social agency, speaking of an arrested time, fixity and repetition, allowed any reading of India through the lens of tradition as universal, essential and thus stable. But this imputed changelessness, passivity and lack of agency were put forward as intrinsic characteristics of Indian peoples, societies and histories. Caught in the conceptual grip of 'tradition', events and changes of a few thousand years could be seen as "blank annals" (Mill, 1968: 118-21), or circular repetitious enactment of the same thing.

The deployment of the concept of tradition, which did not originate in this colonial encounter, but pre-existed in Europe for other and similar sense-making purposes, became a major device for constructing evidence for the historian-judge. Orientalist scholar administrators such as William Jones had already established traditionality as an essence of Indian society, and of the Hindus in particular. In fact from the era of Warren Hastings in the 1770s to the time when Mill was writing his book, colonial civil legislation in India continually assumed and constructed 'tradition' through translation of Hindu and Muslim scriptures and a selective compilation of their personal laws.⁹

The concept of tradition was brought into the definition and otherization of India through the related notions of 'civilization' and 'antiquity'. While concepts such as 'antiquity' and 'civilization' were invested with positive

connotations, as was 'tradition'; for the colonial conservatives of the eighteenth century, they also served as conduits for moral or value judgements about colonized societies. What was meant by 'civilization' at each stage decided whether a country with an old history of complex socio-cultural organization could be called civilized. Thus, the attitude towards traditionality, as well as the types of traditions, decided whether a country was 'civilized' or barbaric and savage. And those who had power and the need to define the 'truth about India', claiming transcendence, had decided that it was a traditional country. Thus it was at once in and out of time and history, replete with peculiar 'barbaric' traditions. Mill is right in a certain sense to claim that he already "knew" India, since a certain categorical formulation of his 'India' was already accomplished by the India Office. But unlike the Orientalists he denied that it was an ancient civilization. As a utilitarian and Malthusian economic liberal he not only had little respect for traditional or ancient civilizations, but even less for eastern ones.

Mill's book begins by dismissing the Orientalist ascriptions of antiquity and civilization to India. His version of this country is projected in no uncertain terms at the very outset:

Rude nations seem to derive a peculiar gratification from pretensions to a remote antiquity. As a boastful and turgid vanity distinguishes remarkably the oriental nations, they have in most instances carried their claims extravagantly high. (Mill, 1968: 107)

He goes on to criticize Orientalist accounts of Hindu creation stories and the Hindu methods of record keeping and chronicle writing. Dubbing the Orientalist acknowledgement of Hindu claims to antiquity as the "national pride of barbarians", he engages in an a priori dismissal of indigenous records, literature and other archival sources as worthless for writing "history". "Judging" the sources and "witnesses" in this peremptory way, Mill displays his power location as a reader of Indian reality and simultaneously manipulates a people's cultural characteristics and relationship with their own history. This power of passing judgement allows him to control and construct socio-cultural "facts", and to represent India and its peoples according to his own interpretive schema or discursive organization.

This disregard for indigenous literature and chronicles, echoed later by Macaulay, as "monstrous fables" of barbarians without fact or logic, pits Mill against the Orientalists. He was particularly dismissive of their impartiality and accuracy, since they knew Indian languages, lived there and enjoyed the

literature that they found. Thus they lacked the necessary detachment which Mill considered essential for a judge, and he found himself eminently suitable for his task on the very ground of lack of any direct connection with or experience of India.

H.H. Wilson, an Orientalist scholar administrator who went on to become Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, on the other hand, edited *The History of British India* and provided extensive footnotes correcting Mill's "errors" in representing Indian culture or history. Asserting that Europeans cannot "know" India without learning its ancient and modern languages and reading extensively to develop a cultural literacy to be complemented by discussions with Indians, Wilson offered in his "corrections" a parallel text on the history of India.

Wilson's footnotes and commentaries highlight Mill's enormous ignorance of India and his even greater arrogance that his very ignorance was a prerequisite for or even a kind of knowledge. Mill was the earliest propagator of the notion that India did not have a "history", a notion that was to be found from Marx to modern times. For Mill India lacked "history" both in terms of an intellectual discipline and a social progression or evolution in time, expressive of agency and originality. Presenting Hindus both as infantile liars and the real "natives" of India, caught in fantasy and blind to the difference between fact and fiction, and Indian Muslims as foreign invaders who kept minimal records, Mill regarded European historians such as himself as the real historians of India.

Mill's view of himself as the definitive historian of India and desire to deny India history in every sense exposes him to crude inconsistencies. On the one hand, his own lack of willingness and ability to do primary research on India makes him reliant on early Greek and other later European sources. He is constrained to say that Orientalists "had studied the Indian languages" and had "acquired the means of full and accurate information." (Mill, 1968: 118) But they were seduced by that very means into a positive view of India, especially of the Hindus. Mill drew instead upon the Greeks for denigrating social features which "bear no inaccurate resemblance to those which are found to distinguish this people at the present day." Thus he stated, "We have no reason to suppose that their knowledge of the hindus was valuable." (Mill, 1968: 118) Mill's double project was to degrade and deny Indians any worthwhile historical and cultural agency, and thus any history of having done so. His ultimate goal seems to have been the establishment of an empty historico-cultural slate and barbaric traditions. He shared with the Protestant missionaries

the conviction that Indians were essentially degenerate and full of "insincerity, mendacity, venality and perfidy" (Niranjana, 1990: 776-77).¹⁰

Mill's pathological dislike of Indians, and the colonial social relations which provide both the context and the content of his book, are glossed over by his manipulative use of categories such as 'tradition', 'civilization', 'barbarism' and 'savagery'. This allows him to construct a social space which is simultaneously rigidly ordered and enclosed, and yet formless and primeval, a space which is condemned to cycles of repetition and chaos. The best example of this view is to be found in his reading of the caste system, which he saw both as irrational and fraught with cruel "iron laws" (Mill, 1968: 153). Wilson's extensive footnote on this topic, however, not only showed up Mill's scanty reading and reliance on rumour, but also the complexity of caste as a multifaceted social organization and fast mutating social practices, as dynamic social relations rather than a discourse of tradition. Mill's ascriptive confidence actually rested on the a priori notion of European superiority over conquered 'others' legitimating rule. But what also becomes evident is that the modalities of colonial rule varied. The goals and practices of a mercantile monopoly (East India Company) differed substantially from ideological aspirations of the colonial state. Thus Mill's dismissal of subsequent research for writing Indian history can be contrasted to the statement of the Company official Wilson, also the Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta, about research on India being in "the veriest of infancy", or his view that Mill's opinions of Indian society, "to say the least of them", were "premature".¹¹ Wilson's view of India as "traditional" was coherent with 'civilization', nor was the story or history of India one of unqualified decline. But for Mill a degeneration followed after the Aryans, whom he represents as "aboriginal" peoples of India. After the Aryan "golden age" India became a static yet chaotic society. Degenerating and freezing further under Muslim invasions and rule, it remained stagnant and decadent until the arrival of British rule (Mill, 1968: 113). Mill created his own "Robinsonade" (see Marx, 1977: 83-85) through this teleology of Indian history, constructing it with Enlightenment notions of civilization and humanism and the moral lens of Evangelicalism. That is to say, he created a history of India as a tool of a current political and ideological project.

As such he denied or distorted all political developments within India, including that of state formation and the development of legislation. He invented an Aryan nomadic stage of pastoralism superimposed with a nuclear family form (Mill, 1968: 122). This happy pastoral stage, according to Mill, is followed by a tortuous route of decline. But Orientalist and other European

insistences force him to impute to India a qualified form of 'civilization'. "The first rude form of a national polity" is to be found in "fully as early a period as any portion of the race" (Mill, 1968: 122). But he also adds that the "cautious inquirer will not probably be inclined to carry this era very far back." (Mill, 1968: 122, fn 1) The legislative complexities of the earlier periods translated by the Orientalists are seen by Mill as exceptional achievements of "superior spirits", rather than as a general development of political and social government. According to him:

The first legislator of the Hindus, whose name it is impossible to trace, appears to have represented himself as the republisher of the will of God. He informed his countrymen that, at the beginning of the world, the creator revealed his duties to man, in four sacred books, entitled Vedas; that during the first age, of immense duration, mankind obeyed them, and were happy; that during the second and third they only partially obeyed, and their happiness was proportionately diminished; that since the commencement of the fourth age disobedience and misery had totally prevailed, till the Vedas were forgotten and lost; that now, however, he was commissioned to reveal them anew to his countrymen, and to claim their obedience. (Mill, 1968: 125)

Wilson's comment on this is telling: "The whole of this is imaginary; there is no such legislation, there are no such assertions in Hindu tradition." (Mill, 1968: 125, fn 1) Flying in the face of all available evidence, Mill also claimed that there was no property, revenue or justice system in India, nor a system of public finance and public works, nor a knowledge of the art of war. For this lack he resorted to explanations based on the "laziness of the Hindus" (Mill, 1968: 133, fn 1). Wilson's comments, establishing his difference from Mill, allow for variant readings of a colonized society from within the very precincts of colonial rule. But on the whole these debates from within expose at their clearest the articulation between knowledge and social relations of power.

The overall colonial project, however, comes out loud and clear when we see that while disagreeing with the Orientalists on many counts, Mill develops in his history one Orientalist theme to its fullest — that of Asiatic Despotism. In his formulation converged two negative perceptions of the peoples of India. For the sources of this despotism were traced to both caste-bound, 'traditional' Hindus (with their self-enclosed village societies) and Muslims, already renowned in post-crusade Europe as absolute despots, with a racial and religious propensity in this direction (Said 1981). 'Asiatic' political institutions and economies were claimed to be sustained by brute force, superstition,

authoritarianism and tradition (Mill, 1968: 141). Mill validated this stance through the conflation of the typological idea of the Monarch and the practical system of government in different historical stages. Taking statements from Manu literally, oblivious of similar European iconography of the monarch, Mill posited a monstrously totalitarian system of government for India, as an intrinsic expression and requirement of the peoples (Mill, 1968: 141).

The Eurocentrism or racism inherent in the concept of Asiatic Despotism as a manipulation of the concept of 'traditional society' is exposed through the textual contradictions between Mill and Wilson, as well as through Mill's own contradictions. For example, the rigidity of this notion stands in curious contrast to Mill's simultaneous construction of Indian culture and polity as chaotic and formless. Wilson's copious footnotes signal to the complexity of actual political practices, in sharp contrast to Mill's construction of symbolic fixities. Wilson questions both Mill's claims that the government which "almost universally prevailed in the monarchies of Asia ... was contrivance extremely simple and rude" (Mill, 1968: 142), and that the Hindu king/sovereign combined all functions of the state in himself (Mill, 1968: 143). Instead he draws attention to the similarities between European and Indian governing systems, remarking that:

In the more skillful governments of Europe, officers were appointed for the discharge of particular duties in the different provinces of the empire. ... all together act as connected and subordinate wheels in one complicated artful machine. (Mill, 1968: 145)

The notion of Asiatic Despotism in India should be seen as less descriptive than ascriptive, as a conceptual artefact for legitimization. It allowed Mill and others to advocate despotic rule for India by joining it with the concept of tradition and locating it as a cultural essence. It is through this device that India was judged to be fundamentally unsuited to democracy, and positively responsive to authoritarianism. This same sentiment was expressed by James Mill in his *Essay on Government*, while his son John Stuart Mill (1972) in *On Liberty* justified a draconian rule of India on the same grounds.¹² Indian demands for a constitutional rule could be thus dismissed on the very same ground. Marx's essays on colonialism and India, as with the thesis of lack of history, contains the same faith in Asiatic Despotism.

Mill constructed Hindus and Muslims into separate and self-enclosed cultural categories, and organized Indian history into three periods of rule, namely Hindu, Muslim and British. This conceptual process of fragmentation

and categorization, started in the eighteenth century, became a developed historiography in *The History of British India*, written in legitimization for British rule. This historiography was based on a periodization of European history. The golden age of the Aryans declined into the dark middle ages of Muslim conquests and rule, followed by the enlightened rule of Britain. Contrary to all evidence, Muslims were projected as outsiders, and the composite or hybrid culture of North and East India were ignored. All this provided the basis for a colonialist strategy of divide and rule, while the British presence in India was traced in terms of legitimacy to trade permissions and land grants given by the Muslim emperors and lesser Muslim rulers. Instead the fear that they were seen by Indians as invaders and usurpers was never allayed for the English by their massive military might. The equation of the Mughals and the English as outsiders, and the negative depiction of the Muslims, gave the English a moral prerogative to rule and even the claim of being the better rulers. It is not surprising therefore that the European claim to be better rulers is phrased in Mill's volume in stereotypes of warlike, "saracenic" fanaticism, with an inbuilt ascription of sensuality, cruelty and luxury. The fact that the Muslims made a self-conscious historical effort by creating descriptions or keeping records, or had art, architecture, mathematics and philosophy, did not redeem them in Mill's eyes, nor was he able to see Indian Islam as a specific or syncretic formation, or Muslims as diverse groups in their regional cultural varieties.

By reinforcing the Orientalist notion of the Hindus as the (ab)original sons of the soil, Mill 'Hinduized' India in a highly effective way, while taking away from 'Hindu India' the attributes of civilization. Thus the 'Hindus' were greatly in need of civilization, which the Muslims, who were themselves barbaric and succumbed to 'Hindu' culture instead, could not provide. But unlike the Orientalists, Mill had no project of restoring India to its pristine ancient glory. The ancient venerable India of the Orientalists was for Mill only a moment of immaturity, "the dawn of childhood of human kind". As a patriarchal and patrician stern schoolmaster, rather than an Indological scholar, Mill advocated discipline and punishment for the good of this "wild, barbaric, savage and rude" people. As far as he was concerned, the Indian people were "a people over whom the love of repose exerts the greatest sway, and in whose character aversion to danger forms a principal ingredient." (Mill, 1968: 153)

It is interesting to note how Mill slides between binary notions, such as age and childhood, order and chaos, nature and culture, barbarism and tradition, in his ideological construction of 'India'. He resolves the contradiction be-

tween tradition and savagery or barbarism by positing that their traditionality is itself an indication of savagery. It is this elision between tradition and savagery, or culture and nature, or better still, nature as culture (see Dirks, 1992: 1-3), which allows Mill the maximum leverage to accommodate diverse cultural features without himself suffering from any sense of contradiction (Niranjana, 1990: 776). It also allows him to introject inferiority into the difference between Europeans and their Indian colonized subjects. This silences the Indian prerogative of self-representation, and justifies colonial rule as an expression of progress or improvement.

Mill completed his project in 1817, but its method, which produces ideology, separating forms of knowing from ways of being, both in history and in present-day social organization, continues. The project of inventing cultural categories to accomplish the task of ruling continues unabated. Tradition is still a legitimation for domination, and an excuse to modernize, that is, to recolonize.

NOTES

1. See Edward Said (1979) regarding cultural-colonial construction of the 'Orient' or the 'East' as a knowledge/power category, and the implication of the 'West's' cultural-political identity and politics.

2. See Raymond Williams (1983: 318-20) for an evolution and application of this concept.

3. See the discussion of modernization theorists of the MIT school in the context of 'development', such as Rostow and Kuznet, for an overall grasp of this position.

4. See Ronald Inden (1990) for an extended discussion of this colonial cultural-political construction of India, which attempts a project partially similar to Said's *Orientalism*.

5. See also Smith (1987: 181-85) on the notion of "standpoint" of knowledge, and Smith (1990: 30-57) on the ideological (i.e. ruling) role of intellectuals (sociologists and others) in the construction and maintenance of the ruling apparatus.

6. See also Smith (1987: 49-69) on the implication of knower's location in the production of knowledge.

7. See Mill's "Preface" to Volume I for the full exposition of his method of history writing and his conception of what properly constitutes 'history'.
8. Throughout Volume I, Book II, Mill disputes with the Orientalist historians and translators just as much as he disputes the fact of India having a history.
9. For Hastings and personal law, see Sangari and Vaid (1990).
10. See also R. Hyam (1992) for a reworked version of masculinity and personality of colonized males.
11. See Wilson's footnotes on issues of caste and other social practices in Chapter II, and on government laws in Chapter III, especially pp. 126-40.
12. "Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealings with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end." (John Stuart Mill 1972: 73).

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Writing Peasant Life in Colonial India:

A Comparative Analysis of Rev. Lal Behari Day's *Bengal*

Peasant Life and Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*

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The advent of realism in nineteenth century Indian literature would seem to be marked by a profound and radical shift of vision towards rural society caught in the throes of colonization. Powerful and authentic accounts of peasant life in prose fiction emerged during this period, starting with Rev. Lal Behari Day's 1874 novel *Bengal Peasant Life*, now justly recognized as the inaugurating text of fictional realism in Indian English writing.¹ There is, however, a whole new dimension to Day's achievement if we allow for the fact that Day's English-language text played a crucial and a critical role in the generation of realism in nineteenth century Oriya prose fiction. This would seem to be best evidenced by the shaping influence exerted by *Bengal Peasant Life* on the first major Oriya novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* (1897) by Fakir Mohan Senapati.

The arrival of a realistic masterpiece like *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* on the Oriya literary scene, until then dominated by historical romances, cannot of course be accounted for in terms of a sudden inexplicable emergence or the mysterious workings of genius.² The fact of Senapati's prior reading of *Bengal Peasant Life* and the existence of demonstrable interconnections between the two novels under review would render such a theory untenable.³ It is the contention of this paper that Senapati's text builds on a pre-text, that is *Bengal Peasant Life*, and, does so, moreover, by rewriting and reworking Day's essentially submissive account of Indian peasant life in order to construct a text that is profoundly subversive of colonial power.

II

Bengal Peasant Life was written in response to an award announced by an enlightened Bengali Zamindar (landowner) for the best novel, to be written either in Bengali or in English, illustrating the "Social and Domestic Life of the Rural Population and the Working Classes of Bengal". The book had won for the author, Rev. Lal Behari Day, the coveted award together with the prize money of fifty pound sterling, a fabulous sum of money at the time. Day had

chosen to write in English, thereby ruling out the possibility of producing one of the earliest realistic novels of agrarian life in an Indian language. What he did produce, however, was significant by the criteria of those times, aesthetic or otherwise. For Day had written a work of prose fiction with realism as its motive force: "The reader is to expect here a plain and unvarnished tale of a plain peasant, living in this plain country of Bengal — I beg the pardon of that sublime poet who sung in former days of the 'hills of Hooghly and the mountains of the Twentyfour Parganas' — told in a plain manner."⁴ The words "plain" and "unvarnished" in this passage, however, seem to give the operation away. The radicalism of Day's realist project, announced with such flourish in the opening chapter by way of an injunction to the reader to avoid the "marvellous" and the "romantic" and by way of an implicit comparison of the novel form itself to a commodity, is considerably compromised by this emphasis on plainness. *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is also, in many ways, a classic account of "Oriya peasant life".⁴ This account is, however, not marked by plainness either in the characterization or in the narrative structure. Senapati's realism, too, would seem to be a much more complex affair, involving as it does a grasp of the totality of human meaning and action, comprising language, desire and power.

Bengal Peasant Life offers a series of snapshots of the social and domestic life of the village of Kanchanpur in the Burdwan district of Bengal as through a camera which alternately pans widely and zooms in for a close-up of a representative family of tenant farmers, the Samantas. Photographic metaphors preponderate in the narrative, as evidenced by the narrator's attempt to sketch (Chapter 3), describe (Chapter 4) and photograph (Chapter 5). Such photographic realism, especially when it is joined to the not so venerable intention of painting the quaint rural scenes of Bengal for the edification of the English, tends to make rather short work of the novel's story-telling potential. Senapati for his part has not been interested in subordinating the story-telling dynamics to the demands of this kind of realism. For him the essence of realism seems to consist in a fictional reworking of the concerns and the imperatives of colonial history.

Chha Mana Atha Guntha impresses one primarily as a story well told, a story which recreates the history of colonial Orissa of the 1830s when the land tenancy laws introduced by the British meant that land was to be measured, parcelled out and shifted from one owner to another — a process that is reflected in the title of the novel, which literally means six acres and thirty-two decimals of land — endlessly. The story of alienation of land from its tiller is also at the heart of Day's novel. It is after all the same story of the tenant losing

out his 'paternal acres' to the village Zamindar that constitutes the core of both the novels. The story in Day's novel does not, however, resonate with wider echoes as does the story in Senapati's novel with its revelation of a three-fold pattern of displacement of land and language and political power. The passage of the estate from the Bagha Sinhas of the military Oriya aristocracy through Seikh Dildar Mian, a Muslim horse trader to the upstart Oriya money-lender and Zamindar, Rama Chandra Mangaraj, the protagonist of the novel, and, finally to Ram Ram Lala, a clever urban lawyer in the latter novel is part of a larger process of change from Sanskrit to Persian to English that has overtaken the country as a whole.

Though concerned with the same cluster of experience, no two novels are more unlike one another. There is a great difference in the way in which the narrative is structured and delivered in the two novels in question. If Senapati followed Day in placing the story of dispossession of a poor and simple man — Bhagia and Saria — at the centre of his novel, he differed with him over how to present this story. Day, for instance, followed his hero, Govinda Samanta, from his birth through his adolescence and youth to his ignominious end at the hands of law, typified by the "ruthless phodosh-amin" (363), along a chronological time sequence. This linear and cumulative structure is quite effective in stirring pity, but not in much else. For Senapati, given his concern with historical dynamics of change and conflict, this sequence had to be disrupted if the subject were not to be reduced to a cipher. Accordingly, he despatched the land-grabbing part of the story early on in the novel — in Chapter 14 —, and, what is more, by making it occur off-stage and then by reporting it through the hushed conversation of the perpetrators of the crime, the upstart Oriya money-lender and his maid-cum-concubine, Champa. This device is more effective than the straightforward reporting of Day's narrator in that it contributes to the heightening the story with Mangaraj, the present possessor of the Zamindari of Fatepur Sarasandha, and, then moving backwards in time to narrate the history of how he acquired the estate from Sheikh Dildar Mian through fraud and deceit. The disruption of chronology has the singular advantage of linking the lives and actions of Senapati's characters with large historical forces which are in operation.

III

The role of the narrator in the two novels under consideration here has also been conceived differently. *Bengal Peasant Life* might have been a point of departure for *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* in respect of subject matter and setting.

but Day does not have anything to teach Senapati in matters of narration, except perhaps negatively. It is as if he obliges Senapati by his own narrator's demureness and diffidence to conceive of the narrator's role in dialectical and dynamic terms. If *Bengal Peasant Life* has what we might call a submissive, English-adoring narrator, then *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* presents a subversive, English-bashing narrator. Day's narrator, who is steeped in the classics of Western letters, and, who, therefore, is in awe of them, must constantly set up scenes and situations from them as reference points while rendering Indian realities. Thus the Bengal plough cannot be thought of without reference to the description of the same in Hesiod and Virgil. Nor can the hookah be described without invoking the lines of the "Homer of English novelists" (21). Nor, for that matter, can the flora and fauna of the Indian village be posited without giving in parenthesis their Western-invented botanical names. It is also interesting that, when after twenty-six chapters the story or tale, promised in the beginning, fails to get off the ground, the narrator offers in the twenty-seventh chapter a Johnsonian justification, saying that just as in Richardson the story gives occasion to the "sentiment", the story in this "humble" narrative "only gives occasion" (184) to the portrayal of Bengal peasant life. All this goes to show a highly sophisticated sensibility no doubt, but it is one that looks calculated to please an English-educated audience by a display of deference to Western models.

The truth, of course, is that no amount of Western training, precisely because it tends to colonize and subjugate, can help infuse that strength to a cultural and literary product which does not exploit its indigenous resources. The balance sheet of writers working under colonialism has been perceptively drawn by Viney Kirpal in her article "The Third World Fiction" (1988):

On the credit side, colonialism has modernised these societies, introduced new modes of production, introduced a system of liberal education that has helped the native to question the traditional, authoritarian, superstition-ridden modes of thought, introduced him to an alternative liberal religion; on the debit side, the colonisers consciously worked to break the spirit of rebellion against British rule by educating the native 'suitably' and by engendering an inferiority complex and diffidence in him vis-a-vis his own culture and traditional values. (211-12)

Bengal Peasant Life, one might say, answers perfectly to the above description. As the epigraphs and allusions drawn from a wide range of Western texts amply reflect, the narrator draws on two mutually incompatible sources,

namely the rational tradition developed in the West from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century romantic tradition of veneration for rusticity threatened with disintegration. Thus rural life of Kanchanpur is constructed through mutually opposing paradigms as idiotic and idyllic. Thus, "on the credit side", while superstitions of ignorant villagers such as belief in ghosts and in things supernatural are debunked and the English civilization praised for directing the light of reason onto them, there runs through the text, "on the debit side", a kind of Rousseauistic glorification of precisely the self-same consciousness. The narrator betrays an anxiety to please the West, and this he does in two main ways: firstly, by mystifying the heavily ritualized Hindu society, and secondly, by appealing to the prize Western values of rationalism, privacy and individualism. This Eurocentrism is manifest as much in the praises showered upon the colonial power for its civilizing/colonizing mission as in the espousal by the colonized of a Western concept of education (as in the case of Govinda's father Badan) and a Western notion of sexual love (as in the case of Govinda's sister Malati who refers to the liberating English customs of pair-bonding independently of parental influence and pressure). This seeping of Western ideas and values into the consciousness of the secluded villagers of Kanchanpur is a sign of the extent of infiltration, or what Edward Said has called the "export of England into the colonies" (1989: 149).

This is not to say that the narrator of *Bengal Peasant Life* is devoid of redeeming features altogether. There are moments when the realities of having to write about a colonized society assert themselves, forcing the narrator to adopt an anti-British stand, something that might be said to belong to "the credit side" with a vengeance. The first anti-British note is sounded in the novel in Chapter 17 which describes Govinda's schooling. Govinda goes to the village "pathsala" at Kanchanpur, the school of Ram Rup Sarkar, who, as the narrator informs us, specializes in things "terrestrial" (76) as opposed to the "celestial mathematics" of the village astrologer. The word terrestrial for Day's narrator is a term of approbation rather than censure, signifying as it does practicality and usefulness, qualities in which, as he says, the system of schooling introduced by the colonizers are deficient: "Of the two systems, the system of the village pathsala, which aims at the practical and the useful, is infinitely more sensible. By all means have the ornamental part of education, but do not sacrifice utility to ornament." (116) It is the same deep-rooted concern for the indigenous that makes the narrator detect the paradox lying at the heart of evangelical Christianity in Chapter 25, the way in which, for instance, a Government calls itself Christian but makes no bones about the

introduction and promotion of drunkenness in India. This whole ambiguous cultural formation under colonialism is concretized in the novel in the person of John Murray, the indigo-planter of Durganagar and the scourge of his workers, who refer to him as Mr. Mari, meaning the one who thrashes, but who, as the narrator points out, "was a gentleman of good family and some education", and whose "manners, especially to Europeans, were exceedingly pleasing ..." (303) However, it is the ruin of Govinda, the protagonist of the novel, through the convoluted workings of the Revenue Code Regulations, especially VII of 1799 and V of 1812, the creations of British colonial power, which is the most telling commentary of the narrator on the inequities of the British rule in India. These narratorial perceptions, though potentially subversive, and, though they press against the limits of a hegemonic ideology, are rendered rather harmless and lose their cutting edge by being enclosed within an overall English- adoring stance.

This is the appropriate moment for us to consider the irreverent, English-bashing narrator of Senapati's *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*. There is admittedly enough in this story of intrigue, suspense and murder to sustain the reader's interest. It is the "loquacious narrator-advocate", as J.V. Boulton terms it in his essay on Senapati, which really steals the show.⁵ There are numerous occasions in the novel when the narrator digresses from the story-line to allude to the bizarre phenomenon of what can be termed 'Englishing' which seems to be overtaking the whole of Oriya society as the narrator is writing. A very good example of this is to be found in the famous trial chapter of the novel entitled "Cuttack Sessions Judge Court". The narrator here completes a round of satirical observation on the flood-like onrush of English civilization, initiated in Chapter 6, with the following words:

Sahib is a past master in signing the depositions of witnesses and pronouncing his verdict. Today, however, Sahib has to do everything himself, because the witness in question happens to be an Englishman. The verdict, for the very same reason, has also to be penned in English. Today's institutions are all Englished. But we and our readers, being Oriyas, and, the script of our printing press being equally indigenous, we have to take recourse to translation in this instance in order to make ourselves understood. (134)

Before proceeding with our analysis we might pause briefly here to remark on the special resonance of the word translation in the above passage. Translation, as Eric Cheyfitz has brilliantly argued, "was, and, still is, the central act

of European colonization and imperialism in the Americas.” (1991: 104) It is a way, as he goes on to explain, of figuring out the native as inferior, unworthy and inadequate. In British India too translation was the colonizing activity par excellence, as can be attested from the fact that the missionaries and the administrators were relentlessly engaged in this act of translating the natives. Thus, by stepping into the role of a translator, Senapati’s narrator is asserting his identity as a subject, is resisting what Cheyfitz has termed “the monologic politics of translation” (xx). In other words, Senapati’s narrator opens the narrative to the process of dialogization, which is evident, for instance, in the above passage in the time lag, in the deferral that exists between the “today” that designates the day of court proceedings in the action of the novel, and the “today” that refers to the process of systematic “Englishing”.⁶

Chha Mana Atha Guntha is, in a deeper sense, a critique of the reifying, colonizing power of reason, law, science, democracy, and, of practically every other product of Western civilization. What makes the reading of the novel such a fascinating experience is the sense of delighted and unrelenting narratorial resistance to the discourse of Western society. The narrator not only engages in a kind of Dickensian caricature of the English (the English doctor is introduced to us as A.B.C.D. Douglas, son of E.F.G.H. Douglas); he also expresses a desire for what Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, writing about an analogous decolonizing narrative aspiration, that of the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, calls a “desire for restitution” (JJCL 18- 19: 33). He does the latter by placing the English institutions, imported into India, alongside the traditional and indigenous systems like the caste council and the ‘panchayat’ (the rule by the five elders of the village) in order to expose the inadequacy of the former and to establish the integrity of the latter. The following quotation from Chapter 10 of the novel gives a succinct idea of how Senapati’s narrator performs this dual function:

‘Caste money’ means that if any member of the caste misbehaved, then the five elders would impose a fine on him. ... If a poor weaver was unable to pay a fine, the five elders would stand by him and support him. ... This noble custom of settling disputes is now on its way out. In the present times the doors of law courts are wide open to everyone. People have become knowledgeable and civilized; why should anyone care for the rule by the five elders anymore? The English law warns — “Watch out my friend. If you commit a crime, and if we get legally valid proof of it, you shall be punished.” A clever man answers, “Sir, I know what to do so that you don’t get any pro proof.” The lawyer,

patting him on the back, adds, "Don't you worry. Give me money. I can make black white and white black." (43-44)

The subversive function is also achieved in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* by the narrator's vigorous mobilization of the resources of the many-layered folk tradition of the Oriya village. The novel is, among other things, an enactment of the process of decay of the communal-rural-oral tradition of Oriya society in the wake of a culture of written record and cold print. A highly potent and expressive image, namely that of being pen-locked (Chapter 19, p. 127 and Chapter 24, p. 160), has been used in the novel to convey the sense of being entrapped in the bureaucratic culture of writing. The invocation of a many-layered idiomatic life, nourished by songs, jokes, hearsay and legends, in this context, is deeply significant. It recreates, or rather restitutes for the reader the crowded, many-voiced world of the Oriya village in the process of being ruthlessly mown down by the colonial re-ordering of the Oriya society. The following sketch of a typical village scene in Chapter 16 makes this amply clear:

The women of the village came rushing; Rebati, Sankari, Malia, Sukuri, Jema's mother, Bhima's aunt, Hagura's mother, Sodari, Menki, Kanak, Neta grandma, Sabi, Kamali, sister Padi, daughter-in-law of Sama, Nalita, Biska, Sumitra, the milkman family's new bride. Somebody with a baby in arms, someone leading a child by hand, somebody following somebody else, somebody making a dash all by herself. Sakra's mother was mopping her house; came rushing on hearing the news, her unwashed hand raised like a snake's hood. (91)

This carnivalesque parade or recital of rustic names, itself a device used by Senapati's narrator to counter the flood-like onrush of homogenizing English values, makes manifest the complexity and the dynamism of rural society. This is significantly lacking in Day's portrayal of rural society in *Bengal Peasant Life*, and, understandably so, because Day, in deference to his English models, is interested in writing a version of pastoral, which, as William Empson has reminded us, is a process of putting the complex into the simple.⁷ Thus the oral tradition, we might say, acts as a further weapon in the arsenal of Senapati's narrator, enabling him to exploit the power of language in the interest of subverting the language of power.

IV

In this section we take up the question of language, because nothing else demonstrates so clearly Day's negative influence upon Senapati as the choice of language. However cognate they might be in terms of theme and setting — and we cannot miss the obvious thematic, anecdotal parallels between the two texts, and, we might say, the sense of parallelism is reinforced by the use of same or similar chapter headings — *Bengal Peasant Life* and *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* are ultimately different by virtue of their language being different. If the one is an Indo-English novel, the other is an Indian-language novel, and, hence, more deeply rooted in the soil and the psyche of its people. *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is the kind of writing that will be impaired in the process of translation, as the first English translation of the novel published under the title of *Stubble under the Cloven Hoof* (1967) by C.V.N. Das demonstrates. The novel as Senapati has written it is hardly distinguishable in Das's rendering with its all too obvious Eurocentric pull. Interestingly enough, Das's translation, in its attempt to make Senapati's great novel accessible to a non-Oriya, maybe an English readership, constructs out of the novel a text that resembles Day's *Bengal Peasant Life* in many ways.⁸ The narrator of this translated version, insofar as he invokes the Western classics and draws his mottos from them, has lost all his playfulness and irreverence, and, is no longer the same "loquacious and discursive narrator-advocate" (85) of which Boulton has spoken. In *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* the epigraphs, episodes and allusions are meant to be signposts, pointing the direction in which the history of a language, of a people is moving forward. The allusions of the novel in particular authorize a reading of it as a profound allegory on colonization. The allusions to Lord Clive's annexation of Bengal in Chapter 8 which describes Mangaraja's taking away of the estate from the Muslim trader Sheikh Dildar Mian through fraud, and, to the Kohinoor gem in Chapter 25 when the story has almost come full circle are cases in point. In both the story of displacement and alienation of land is read under the sign of the nightmarish history of British occupation of Orissa. *Bengal Peasant Life* is lacking in such historically specific allusions. What allusions or references there are in it serve to create a sense of melancholy and retrospect which is traceable to the influence of British country writing with its abiding myth of an unlocalized past golden age existent before the advent of industrial capitalism.

The proof of how the use of Oriya helps to ground and authenticate descriptions of rural society in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* whereas the use of English does not quite live up to the occasion in Day's novel can be shown by looking

at two representative chapters from the novels: "Asuradighi" of the former and "Ladies' Parliament" of the latter. Both the chapters are about the village tank, and, both present a similar conception of the bathing ghat as the site of shared communal life and as the village news room, especially for the female of the species. Senapati might in all probability have taken the point from Day, but if he did so, he effected a radical transformation of it by elaborating it in Oriya which gave him access to certain potent structures of perception and ways of seeing denied to the non-native speaker. Here is the passage describing the bathing ghat of Asuradighi tank:

You might wonder, sir, at the name, market place, if the women of the village are bought and sold here. It is actually the crowd and the noise which create the impression of a market place. The place gets very crowded at the time of the morning ablutions. If there were a news daily in the village, the editor of the same would not have had to go around in search of his news. Simply by being seated with a paper and a pencil in hand he could have collected all the juicy bits. (Ch. 12, p. 62)

As has been said, Day anticipates Senapati in this presentation of the gossipy female world. Day's treatment, however, is stereotyped in that it rests content with giving us the commonplaces of Bengali life, as the following quote from *Bengal Peasant Life* would reveal:

Though Bengali women in the villages visit one another in their houses for friendly conversation, nowhere do so many women meet together and talk on so many different subjects — village politics not excluded — as at the bathing ghats of those tanks to which they resort for daily ablutions. ... If the reader wishes to listen to a conversation carried on by a number of women, let him accompany me about the middle of the day, say between eleven and twelve o'clock, to the women's ghat of Raya's tank. ...

A woman who is rubbing her feet sees another woman preparing to go, and says to her —

"Sister, why are you going away so soon? You have not to cook; why are you then going so soon?"

"Sister, I shall have to cook today. The elder bou is not well to-day: she was taken ill last night" ...

"Oh! you have guests in your house. And what are you going to cook?"

"I am going to cook dal of mashkalani, one tarkari, badi fried, fish fried, fish with peppercorns, fish with tamarind, another dish, ... namely amada with poppy-seed." (174-77)

As can be seen from the above sample of conversation, such portrayal as Day has given us here, is of little more than sociological interest. Moreover, the nuances of this world escape from grasp by being represented in English. Senapati's representation, by contrast, being couched in the native idiom, allows for far greater imaginative penetration, humour and objectivity, as witness the following account:

If you will look, you will notice that ten to twenty women came for purposes of bathing. Almost all of them went belly deep into water and started brushing their teeth. Milk-white spittle, ejected from their mouths, are floating all around them like freshly formed foam. A slightly reddish dirty substance, issued from their tongues, is also floating in the water. It is difficult to say what other dirty substances are mixed with it, because all the women have washed their buttocks in the water after having defecated in the fields. ... Some jester was saying the other day that women release half the amount of water they carry away in their pitchers. (64-65)

What is surely being lost in the English rendering are the brilliant innuendoes of the narrator. Not a word is said anywhere in the original passage about buttocks, urination and defecation, and, yet the ecology of the typical Oriya village is vividly conveyed through strategically placed hints. Senapati does not stop here. He proceeds to construct out of these descriptive details a deep and pervasive anti-colonial subtext:

A dozen or two cranes are plodding wearily and unsuccessfully through the mud like menials. ... Two water crows flew in from afar, gorged themselves on the fish, and flew away. One water crow is drying its white wings on the tank's shore like the mem sahib's gown. Oh the cranes of Hindu religion! look at the English water crows, who flew in with empty pockets from a remote place and feasted themselves on your food. You belong here, but you are starving. The critical hour is now come. Hundreds of English water crows will now land on our

shores. You are done for unless you cross the seven seas in order to go abroad. (60-61)

In this highly coded representation the cranes that plod wearily, and, often, unsuccessfully through the mud in the hope of a stray fish stand for the wretched, colonized Oriyas, while the smart white crows who, flying in from a far off place, walk away with the best catch stand for their white colonizers. And Asuradighi, the tank, comes to symbolize the colonized nation as a whole. Senapati's narrator, by exhorting the Indians to fly and swim, and, thereby to beat the English at their own game and on their own ground is implicated in the act of anti-colonial resistance. Once again the narrator is able to exploit the nuances of Oriya language which can easily be lost in translation. *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is a very good example of how, to use Meenakshi Mukherjee's observation about O. Chandu Menon's Malayalam novel *Indulekha* (1889) for our purposes, "the really creative writer transcends his limited model by a firm grasp of his own milieu and time" (1985: 8), and, we might add, language. From Day's diffident English to Senapati's robust Oriya is an extraordinary shift, a shift invested with significant political implications.

V

To read Day's *Bengal Peasant Life* and Senapati's *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* together, as has been attempted here, is to gain an insight into the complex dialectic of reception or influence. The received or influencing text, typified in this instance by *Bengal Peasant Life*, was absorbed, transformed, and, rewritten by Senapati by being used more as a warning than as an example. Given the fact that both texts embodied the same cluster of experience, what made such a rewriting possible was Senapati's radically anti-colonial stance. It is interesting to note that Day has not been able to place himself in a similarly transforming, parodic relationship with his own pre-texts, drawn from Western literature. *Bengal Peasant Life* strikes one as being connected in a seamless whole to the nineteenth century English literature of rural retrospect. There is no attempt here, as in Senapati's *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, to effect a rupture from within the terms imposed by the master or canonical texts. In enabling such a decentring the latter novel, namely *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, offers itself as a contested space where the English-inspired story of Bengal peasantry was received, resisted and forged as the first anti-colonial, nationalist document of Orissa.

NOTES

1. Day's *Bengal Peasant Life* is also known by its alternative title, *Govinda Samanta*. Scholars have long considered this work to be the first realistic novel. In his *Rise of the Indian novel in English* (1987) K.S. Ramamurti has the following comment to make about it: "Lal Behari Day's *Govinda Samanta* may be considered to be the first important novel to appear in English. ... *Govinda Samanta* ... represents the emergence of the novel genre with 'formal realism' which distinguishes it from romance." (56)

2. That Senapati was inevitably influenced in the creation of his great novels has not been disputed by Oriya scholars, but most scholars have tended to consider the novels of nineteenth century Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra as a source of shaping influence on Senapati. Here is an eye or rather ear-witness account from one of Senapati's contemporaries, Pandit Nilakantha Das:

It cannot be said that Fakir Mohan was uninfluenced by any other writer while writing his novels. I have heard Fakir Mohan saying: "Whenever a novel was published in Bengali, especially by Bankim, and I saw it ... I wished there should be novels like these in Oriya." From the above statement, it is understood that for Fakir Mohan Bankim was a source of influence and inspiration. (Cited in Mohanty 1981: 45)

That the influence could have come from a totally unexpected quarter, from an English novel written by an English-educated Indian has rarely occurred to scholars. An attempt has, however, been made recently by Purna Chandra Mishra in his article "*Chha Mana Atha Guntha* Rachanara Antarale" (Behind the Composition of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*) to claim, on the basis of his discovery of demonstrable thematic and episodic parallels, that Senapati was aware of Day's work, and, had, to some extent, modelled himself on it. The attempt of Mishra is, of course, tentative, just as his treatment is rather sketchy. Besides his analysis suffers on account of not being mounted from well-defined theoretical position to do with realism or colonialism or reception. Mishra's article, originally read at a conference, marking the 150th birth anniversary of Senapati; and, organized by the Oriya Department of Berhampur University, Orissa, is now printed in a book that publishes the proceedings of the conference. The book is entitled *Saraswata Parikrama* (1993).

3. Senapati mentions this in his autobiography entitled *Atma Jibana Charita* (1917): "I had studied on my own and with the help of a dictionary only a few English books such as *Arabian Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Bengal Peasant Life* and *The Bible*. This

scanty English learning had come in very useful in my future." (50) Such a statement would naturally encourage one to look for signs of an influence of *Bengal Peasant Life* on *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*.

4. If *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is a classic of peasant life, it is not because of the presence in it of the superficial markers of peasant life such as the use of the "language of the peasants" (EPW, 20-27 October 1990, p. 2388), as Pati avers. It is rather because, as Mishra and Nayak have pointed out in their rejoinder to Pati, of Senapati's profound grasp of land as a site of social conflicts and struggle for power, and, thus of agrarian tension as a human event. As Mishra and Nayak go on to argue, "The whole novel concerns itself with a series of crucial displacements affecting the owners of land. In actuality, agrarian tension ... is so pervasive in the novel that it shapes the psyche of almost all the characters." (EPW, 25 August 1990, p. 1916) We would also like to refer the reader to EPW, 19 January 1991, p. 136 and EPW, 16 November 1991, p. 1652 where Mishra and Nayak have continued this discussion with Pati on the nature of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*.

5. Boulton's discussion of the unique narrative style of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is simply brilliant and cannot be bettered. In order to drive home our point about the dialectical and dynamic narrative method of Senapati in the novel under discussion, we would like to quote a little more from Boulton's essay:

Whole chapters are delivered, as it were, to a jury by Phakirmohana, the loquacious and discursive narrator-advocate, labouring to defend the integrity of Mangaraja. Phakirmohana's arguments, here put forward in mock-legal language and form, have an air of irrefutable logic, immense erudition and profound earnestness. (1974: 85-86)

6. This point about how the narrator in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* inhabits the time frame of the 1890s while narrating an action which is set in Orissa in the 1830s is brilliantly discussed by Natabara Samantaray in his article "*Chha Mana Atha Gunthara Bisayabastu: Eka Spashtikarana*" (The Subject-matter of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*: a Clarification). He shows how the hookah-smoking of Dildar Mian, described in Chapter 8, takes place sometime in 1818, while the analogy with the canalization of Mahanadi river belongs to the 1870s. Having discussed many such examples of what we have called time lag, Samantaray then proceeds to draw from them the unwelcome conclusion that this time lag is an evidence of the mismatch between Senapati and the subject-matter of the novel. We quarrel with him on this score because for us this deferral is a manifestation of the inherent dialogism of the novel form itself. Moreover, Samantaray's criticism is misconceived because the allusion to events occurring at a

later time is not necessarily an anachronism. If Dildar Mian would have been shown to be aware in 1818 of the canalization matter, which, as Samantaray points out, has not materialized before 1866, then it would have been a clear instance of an anachronism. But Senapati has not done so. What he has very finely and legitimately done is to put the past and the present into play, into dialogue.

7. Empson's definition of pastoral as the putting of the complex into the simple is, of course, a broad-based one, covering a range of forms. We refer the reader to the first chapter of Empson's book, entitled "Proletarian Literature".

8. The extent of C.V.N. Das's anglophilism or what one might call colonial mentality can be judged from his prefatory remarks addressed to the reader. Here is a revealing statement: "What at any rate it illustrates is my full faith that English literature can enrich an Indian vernacular tale by teaching him who retells it in English the art of rechristening its thought and imagery and giving it an Indo-Anglian domicile in the commonwealth of letters." (iii) Das's inordinate love for English literature is, of course, meaningful in the context of that literature's built-in class, colour and gender bias, as witness the following comment affixed to the book's dust jacket cover: "His stern South Indian educators, as he recalls, reckoned nobody wise who could not write sinuous English prose that fitted every thought exactly as silken gloves fitted the fair hands of the lily-white memsahibs of those days."

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PARABLE OF A MAN HANGING IN A TREE AND ITS ARCHAIC BACKGROUND¹

Yaroslav V. Vassilkov

At the beginning of his famous book *A Confession* Leo Tolstoy describes the deep crisis which started his spiritual quest, the period when he decided that life was senseless and that he could no longer live. To express the despair that he felt at that time the writer uses the imagery of an old Oriental parable:

There is an Eastern fable, told long ago, of a traveller, overtaken on a plain by an enraged beast. Escaping from the beast, he gets into a dry well, but sees at the bottom of the well a dragon that has opened his jaws to swallow him. And the unfortunate man, not daring to climb out lest he should be destroyed by the beast, and not daring to leap to the bottom of the well lest he should be eaten by the dragon, seizes a twig growing in a crack in the wall and clings to it. His hands are growing weaker, and he feels he will soon have to resign himself to the destruction that waits him above or below, but still he clings on. Then he sees that two mice, a black one and a white one, go regularly round and round the stem of the twig to which he is clinging, and gnaw at it. And soon the twig itself will snap and he will fall into the dragon's jaws. The traveller sees this and knows that he will inevitably perish; but while still hanging, he looks around, sees some drops of honey on the leaves of the twig, reaches them with his tongue and licks them. So I too cling to the twig of life, knowing that the dragon of death was inevitably awaiting me. ... I tried to lick the honey which formerly consoled me, but the honey no longer gave me pleasure, and the white and black mice of day and night gnawed at the branch by which I hang. ... I only saw the inescapable dragon and the mice, and I could not tear my gaze from them. ... The two drops of honey which diverted my eyes from the cruel truth longer than the rest: my love of family and of writing — were no longer sweet to me. (Tolstoy 1933: 20-22)

This parable has been proved to be of an Indian origin. There are several versions of it in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina sources (see: Shokhin 1988: 129, 131-36), some of them rather old, e.g. the Buddhist tales from the Chinese Tripitaka (Julien 1859: 190- 92; Chavannes 1911: 83-84; these Chinese Buddhist tales are, by the way, most similar in their structure and in their allegorical meaning to the story told by Tolstoy). A specific version of the

apologue is represented by the description of the forest of *samsāra* (*samsāragahana*) in the *Mahābhārata* (XI. 5-6). There are, as well, a late Jaina version (Jacobi 1891) and oral, folklore versions, recorded by travellers and missionaries in modern times (see, e.g., Dubois 1906: 433-34; Benfey 1859: I, 81-82; Moul 1884: 94-95). Having gone beyond the frontiers of India, the parable, along with the *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, reached the Far East, and on the other hand in the frame of the famous "Romance of Barlaam and Josaphat", as well as in the form of a separate fable, widely spread across the Near East and then across the Christian countries of Europe (Kuhn 1888: 71-75).² In the thirteenth century this separate fable presented a source of inspiration to the great Persian mystic and poet Jalaaladdin Rumi; in the nineteenth century the German poet F. Rückert made use of Rumi's version for his own poem "Es ging ein Mann in Syrerland", which gained an enormous popularity in Germany, became a favourite item of family reading and was well known even to children. In 1844 the Rückert poem was translated into Russian by Vassily Zhukovsky. But the source from which Tolstoy received the parable had been quite different. Tolstoy made use of the Old Russian version from the "Life of Barlaam and Josaphat", which had been translated into Russian from Greek as early as in the twelfth century.

In the majority of Indian versions a man is pursued by a wild beast (a lion or a tiger, sometimes an elephant), falls down a well (or a pit) and hangs on a branch (or a root) of the tree, which grows on the well's edge. At the bottom of the well there is a large serpent or a dragon. On the four sides the man is surrounded by four poisonous snakes, who are eager to bite him, and two mice, a black and a white one, are gnawing at the root of the tree (or a bush). The angry bees guarding their beehive at the top of the tree swarm in front of his face, but the man does not care at all about these dangers for the sake of drops of sweet honey falling from the tree top. The allegory and its separate elements are usually explained by the Indian texts in the following way: the man in the tree is a human being in the *samsāra*; the well is the human body (or the womb as the place of birth); the elephant (tiger, lion) is death; the dragon at the bottom of the well symbolizes hell or the all-devouring time (*kāla*); the four snakes on the four sides are illnesses, or the four physical elements of which the human body consists; the mice are day and night, and the drops of honey symbolize the ephemeral, illusory joys of this world.

How can we explain the attractiveness of the parable for the people in so many countries, in spite of the differences between the original parable's Hindu or Buddhist attitudes — and, in particular, the Christian (or Moslem) system of values? What was the secret of its unique impact on the audience?

An attempt was made to explain it by indicating that there are in our parable unmistakable elements of a nightmare. Ernst Kuhn long ago noted (Kuhn 1888) that the motifs of a flight from the enraged beast and falling into a pit could be found in the same combination in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, where different kinds of nightmares are described: "And (he feels in his dream) as if somebody kills him, somebody defeats him, as if he is pursued by an elephant, as if he falls into a pit (*hastiva vicchāyayati gartam iva patati* — Br. Up. IV.3.20). Evidently, the pursuit by an elephant and falling into a pit were for an ancient Indian so natural images of a nightmare as are for a modern man the pursuit by a car or a tank and the falling out of a sky-scraper window. Vladimir Shokhin seems to be right when he notices that there are elements of a typical nightmare implanted in some versions of the parable, possibly in order to facilitate for the mind of an adept, in his walking state, the meditation on the image of death (Shokhin 1988: 156). But still this is not the main reason why the parable has such a strong impact on the audience. Both the pursuit by an elephant and the falling into a pit are occasional elements, omitted in many versions, and without them the apologue still holds its sway over the imagination of its readers or listeners. Its main and more or less constant elements are a man, hanging on to a tree, a dragon or a large serpent under the tree, the source of honey on its top, the four poisonous snakes on four sides — and all these elements are connected with each other by a strange but very strong association.

This association, at its deepest level, is archetypal. Modern psychology presents us with the evidence that the image of a man hanging amidst dangers under a source of bliss and hope is always present in the collective unconscious. There is a surprising similarity between the situation in our parable and a picture drawn by a psychiatric patient after he, under the influence of LSD, has experienced anew the act of his own biological birth: an embryo, helpless and frightened, is shown hanging on the umbilical cord; under him some birdlike monsters, which represent destructive forces of the womb, are opening their beaks wide, ready to devour him; from all sides he is threatened by some monstrous paws with sharp claws. But the upper end of the umbilical cord goes into a round aperture which is the only source of light in the picture and evidently the only promise of salvation for the embryo. (Grof 1985: fig.3)

So we may assume that the image, central to our parable, is always present deep in the unconscious of every man's mind and under certain circumstances may be revived and exposed to one's consciousness. The conditions that can trigger the revival of this image in one's mind include evidently the use of some drugs, perhaps the practice of some forms of religious introspection, and,

most probably, passing through certain psychological states connected with acute suffering and stress, such as the psychological experience of death (dying) which is, as modern psychology tells us, strikingly similar to the psychological experience of birth.

But this general archetypal pattern, being embodied in the images of different mythological traditions, may assume different specific forms. And there are ample grounds to define the peculiar imagery of the apologue in question as specific to the Indo-European mythology. The first scholar to suspect the existence of some Indo-European mythological background to the parable was the great Jacob Grimm who compared the situation in it to the description in the Germanic myth of *Iggdrasil* — the cosmic ash-tree in which the main god of ancient Germans, *Odinn*, had been hanging in order to obtain the mead of poetry (Grimm 1813: 80; Grimm 1835: I, 462; IV, 667). The scholars of later times rejected this analogy. Ernst Kuhn (Kuhn 1888) and later L. von Schroeder suggested another parallel: they preferred to compare the honey-bearing tree of the parable with the so-called “inverted *aśvattha*”, mentioned in some Sanskrit sources. The latter is the cosmic tree, growing upside down, the tree whose roots are in heaven and whose branches go down to the earth. In the commentaries it is sometimes called “the tree of *brahman*” and sometimes “the tree of *saṃsāra*”. For several decades von Schroeder’s article (Schroeder 1916) has been considered to contain the final answer to the problem. But now it seems that Jacob Grimm was much closer to the truth than E. Kuhn and L. von Schroeder, who evidently did not take into account that in the mythology of the Indo-Aryans, as well as in the mythology of some other Indo-European peoples, the ‘normal’ world-tree in the centre of the world, which grows upwards from the earth to heaven, and the inverted cosmic tree (the tree of the other world), whose roots are in heaven and whose branches go down to the earth, are different (though related, but different) images. Later, in the systems of religious philosophy these two images also assume different symbolical meanings (see, e.g., Toporov 1974: 43-44, 48-51, 58-59, 70). The motif of honey (or the water of life) at the top as well as the motif of a man hanging on a branch are never connected with the ‘inverted’ tree; they are always associated with a ‘normal’ world-tree, a tree of this world.

There is enough evidence now to reconstruct the common Indo-European (IE) image of the world as a cosmic tree: on its top is a source of the drink of life and youth, which for the sake of convenience may be called by the Sanskrit term *amṛta*. This drink of life may be represented by honey (mead), by a fruit (sometimes fruits, e.g., “the golden apples of *Idun*” in Northern mythology) or a berry; often it is associated with the image of a bird which pecks the fruit

or steals it. The trunk of the tree is associated sometimes with four animals (e.g., in Northern mythology with four deer eating the leaves from the branches of Iggdrasil ash-tree; in early India we find four serpents as the guardians of four cardinal points, see Atharvaveda XII.3.55-58). Under the tree, at its root lies a great serpent or a dragon; once, in a Slavic myth, there are beavers at the roots of the tree (Golovatskiy 1864: 51-52), animals evidently corresponding to the Indian mice.

Side by side with this image of the world-tree in some IE mythologies there exists the image of an inverted tree (*arbor inversa*). The inverted tree is the tree of the other world, be it the heavenly upper world of the gods, or the world of the dead.³

Among many IE people, at their calendar festivals the mythic world-tree was represented by a peculiar ritual construction; in Europe it was sometimes called the May Tree. It was a pole, in many cases — with a wheel or a wreath hanging in a horizontal position close to the top; and the whole construction was usually crowned with some symbols of life and rejuvenation: a vessel, a fruit basket and so on. At the calendar festivals the pole served as a centre for circumambulations and round dances. In many instances the vessel of wine or the basket with fruits and sweets (i.e., the symbols of life and rejuvenation) at the top of the May-tree were objects of a contest between individuals or social groups, and in many rites there is the element of the participants' 'ascension' to these symbolic objects.⁴

In rural India we find the calendar rites of exactly the same type, with slight local variations in their details. For example, in Europe in these rites sometimes it is a bottle of wine which serves as a symbol of life at the top of the ritual pole; in India it would rather be a coconut or a bag of sweets. These rites in some areas are practised by the tribal people but that does not necessarily mean that they are pre-Aryan (i.e., Dravidian or Munda) in origin. On the contrary, there is ample evidence in some cases that these rites originally belonged to the archaic Indo-Aryan culture, but under the pressure of the Brahminic and Hindu tradition they have survived only on the periphery, at the remote frontiers of the Aryan world. All these rites presuppose the ascension of a participant to the symbols of *amṛta*, but some of them also contain an element of particular relevance and importance for the study of our parable: in them a participant hangs on a ritual pole which is undoubtedly in its origin a representation of the world-tree. For example, the Gonds while celebrating the festival of Holi, erect a high wooden post called *meghnāth* (evidently from Skt *meghañātha*, 'support of the clouds'). At the top there is a revolving crossbeam; a rope hangs from one of its ends, and the Gond priest sitting in a

loop at the end of this rope is turned several times round the top of the post — as on a merry-go-round. After this the village headman presents him with a coconut (as it was mentioned, one of the Indian ‘symbols of *amṛta*’) (Crooke 1914, 69; Russell 1916, III, 116-17). The *meghanāth* rite and a similar rite practised by the Bhils seem to be local variants of a rite widely spread in rural India, practised in thousands of villages where the inhabitants speak Indo-Aryan languages. This rite, performed usually as part of the Holi festival, is known to Western scholars under the misleading name of ‘hook-swinging’. The true name of the rite is usually *carak-pūjā* or *cakra-pūjā* — the ‘Wheel-rite’. The movement in this rite cannot be called ‘swinging’ — it is a rotatory motion of the participant, hanging in a loop or fastened to a hook (which hangs from a moving crossbeam), around the central post, on a horizontal plane. In the old form of the rite, which was forbidden by the British, the hook often had been plunged into the flesh of a participant’s back. After the rotation, the participant is presented with a drink of water sweetened with sugar (undoubtedly, a symbol of *amṛta*). The mythological interpretations of the rite are various, but the most important and, it seems, the most ancient is the one explaining the rotatory motion of the participant as the flight of Garuda; the participant in this case has a beak and wings, i.e., he is masked and dressed as the mythical bird (Powell 1914: 167). So the mythological background to this form of the rite was provided by the ancient myth recorded in the Mahabharata (I. 29. 1-10), where the divine bird steals the *amṛta*, guarded by the revolving metal wheel, from its receptacle at the top of the world. Garuda first flew in circles, together with the revolving wheel (this stage is evidently represented in the rite by the rotatory movement of the participant), then he suddenly flew upwards, penetrating between the spokes of the revolving wheel, to the *amṛta* (the winning of *amṛta* was symbolized by drinking of sweet water by the participant, as has been said already).

The rites of this type were well known to the Vedic tradition, and one of them became a part of the Vedic royal rite, *vājapeya*. The king with the help of a wooden ladder ascended to the top of the sacrificial post (*yūpa*), saying three times to his wife: “Come, let us ascend to heaven.” Then he touched with his hand the *caṣāla*, the top-decoration of the post, sometimes having the form of a vessel or a mortar, but sometimes of a wheel, and at that moment he said: “We have reached heaven.” Then, raising his head over the post, he said “We have become immortal.”⁵ After that the king made a rotatory movement round the top of the *yūpa*, while the priests, standing at the foot of the post on the ground at four points of the compass, presented him, using long poles, with small bags of food (supposedly, another form of the *amṛta* symbolism).

There can be no doubt that this Vedic rite had been originally connected with the old mythological world-pattern which was still present in the minds of the people of Vedic culture. Many texts could be referred to in favour of this point, e.g., the Atharvavedic hymns to Rohita (XIII. 1-4), Skambha (X. 7-8) or Kāla (XIX. 53-54), where images of the Wheel of the Sun or the Wheel of Time, the image of the *amṛta* vessel and the motif of ascension to it rapidly interchange. Another example is provided by the famous *Asya Vāmasya*, or the Riddle hymn of the Ṛgveda (I. 164) and in particular by verses 20-22, where we find the images of two birds sitting at the top of the world-tree (*aśvattha*): “One of them eats the sweet fruit; the other looks on without eating.” The same passage says about the birds in the tree that they “are eating honey” and that they “are singing about their share of *amṛta* (*amṛtasya bhāgam*)”. It should be noted that in these verses of the Ṛgveda the idea of “ascension to the source of *amṛta*” for the first time seems to have not only a mythological, but also a mystical, religious meaning. The birds alighting to the top of the tree here not only symbolize the souls of the deceased returning to the source of life before their new incarnations (as is the case in the various IE traditions, including Indian, where this picture is represented in Mbh. V. 45. 7-9), but also probably symbolize some mortals on their spiritual path, in their ascension to the highest values of life. During the earliest period of religious philosophy in India these highest values of existence were still considered to be incorporated in the archaic world-pattern. The *amṛta* vessel, or the ‘sweet fruit’ (or, possibly, a beehive), placed at the top of the world-tree, had become a symbol of ‘immortality’, ‘eternity’ or of the *Brahman*, while the image of a bird in a tree or of a man hanging in a tree beneath the source of *amṛta* now served to metaphorically represent an individual soul striving for the mystical union with the Absolute. *Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad* in a well-known passage (IV. 6-7) repeats the Vedic verse from the *Asya Vāmasya* hymn and then adds another verse:

Two birds, friends joined together, clutch the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit; the other looks on without eating. (6)

On the same tree is a man, immersed [into the sorrows of the world], blinded, mourning over his helplessness; but when he sees the Other — the beloved Lord and His greatness — he is freed from his grief. (7)

The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* repeats these two verses and adds one more:

When the one, who can see, sees the golden coloured Creator, the Lord, the Puruṣa, the source of Brahman (*kartāram iṣaṁ puruṣaṁ brahmayonim*); then, the wise one, shaking off him both good and evil, unblemished, attains the Supreme Union. (Muṇḍ. Up., III. 3)

So there apparently was a period in the history of Indian culture when the image of a man hanging in a tree could signify the process of cognition of the religious truth. Having ascended the tree of this world, a man could reach the source of immortality, the Brahman, whose place was thought to be somewhere at the top of the world-tree.⁶ Parallel to it, there existed another philosophical allegory which used the image of the inverted tree, *arbor inversa* — which symbolized the process of the Brahman's descent into this world. It should be mentioned that the Greek Neoplatonists used the same IE mythological image for the same purpose, and the tradition later was inherited by the Muslim Sufis.

If we read our parable again, we shall now realize that all the elements of the jigsaw have fitted together. The two mice at the foot of the tree, or the six-headed elephant in one of the versions, are the symbols of Time, which are associated with the "tree of this world" in many IE mythological traditions.⁷ The dragon or the serpent under the tree or at the bottom of the well appears to be "the serpent of the abyss", the great serpent at the bottom of the world, known to many mythologies (the archaic Indo-Aryan mythology among them). The four snakes at the four sides correspond, perhaps, to the Buddhist nāgarājas, the serpent deities of the four regions of the world, who personify the totality of the space in a horizontal plane. The source of honey at the top and the man hanging beneath it need not be explained, I hope, after all that has been said.

But if we look still closer, we shall see that in the parable the mythological image of the universe and of the man in it is reproduced with major distortions. It seems as if a process of total reversal of values has taken place. In the Upaniṣads the man hanging in a tree was an image for the seeker of the highest religious truth; but in the parable the man in a tree is an ignorant fool, devoid of any hope for salvation. In the myth and in the early religious philosophy the honey at the top symbolized the drink of youth and immortality or the *amṛta* of divine knowledge; in the parable it has become associated with lies and ignorance — it is the bitter honey of illusory earthly joys. So what has happened?

In the course of time, with the development of religious philosophy in India, the concept of Brahman as the extra-mundane, transcendental Absolute was formulated by the thinkers of the Vedic/Hindu tradition. In Buddhism, accord-

ingly, the highest goal (*nirvāṇa*) had been placed beyond the boundaries of this samsāric Universe. Now this world as a whole, including the highest spheres, becomes desacralized. In many Buddhist and early Hindu texts we find instances of sharp negation of the archaic world-pattern — e.g. in the *Anuṅgītā* (Mbh. XIV. 47. 12-14) the elaborate description of the world-tree, or “the tree of Brahman” in terms of Sāṃkhya philosophy is followed by an appeal to man seeking salvation to cut down this tree with the sharp sword of wisdom. In the same text, not far from this passage, we find another one (XIV. 45. 1-10) where the related image of the Wheel of Time is described in philosophical terms and then follows the appeal to a yogin “to reject and destroy it”. The image of *arbor inversa*, of the heavenly, inverted *aśvattha* is similarly treated in the *Bhagavadgītā* (Mbh. VI. 37. 1-4). It seems that our parable should be viewed against a background of such texts. There are ample grounds to suggest that the original idea of this parable may be interpreted in this light as a rejection or, perhaps, even as much as a parody of the archaic image of the world and of the ritual (or mystic) practice associated with that image.

Up to this point we have dealt with the origins of the parable. Now in conclusion, let us briefly turn to a modern transformation of the same parable — a unique and, in my opinion, a very interesting one. We end as we began with *A Confession* by Leo Tolstoy. The book is, as has been said, a kind of spiritual autobiography. Tolstoy relates the parable at the very outset of the description of his spiritual quest. This description and the whole book at the same time ends with another story — with the so-called “dream of Tolstoy”. The dream is presented to the readers in a kind of postscript. After having reread the manuscript of *A Confession* three years after the book had been written, Tolstoy, as he says, had a dream and decided that “a description of this dream will ... elucidate and unify what has been set forth at such length in the foregoing pages.” In his “dream” the author at first feels that he is lying in bed, but suddenly finds that he is really lying or hanging on some plaited rope supports. As he moves his feet, the supports one by one slip away.

I saw that matters were going quite wrong. ... I asked myself: ‘Where am I and what am I lying on? ... I looked down and did not believe my eyes. I was ... at a height such as I could never have imagined ... To look thither was terrible. ... And I felt that from fear I was losing my last supports, and that my back was slowly slipping lower and lower. Another moment and I should drop off. ... What am I to do? I ask myself and look upwards. Above, there is also an infinite space. I look into the immensity of the sky and try to forget the immensity

below, and I really do forget it. The immensity below repels and frightens me; the immensity above attracts and strengthens me. I know that I am hanging, but I look only upwards and my fear passes. ... And I ask myself: Well, and now am I not hanging just the same? ... I see that I no longer hang as if about to fall, but am firmly held. I look around and see that under me, under the middle of my body, there is one support and that when I look upward, I lie on it in the position of securest balance, and that it alone gave me support before. And then, as it happens in dreams, I imagined the mechanism by means of which I was held. ... It appeared that at my head there was a wooden post; and the security of that slender post was undoubted. ... From the post a loop hung very ingeniously and yet simply, and if one lay with the middle of one's body in that loop and looked up, there could be no question of falling. This was all clear to me, and I was glad and tranquil. And it seemed as if someone said to me: 'See that you remember'. And I awoke.

A textual analysis of this remarkable "dream" leaves no doubt that its text depends on the text of the parable. Suffice it to note that the sequence of the psychological states of the author in the "dream" and the man in the parable is practically the same (though their evaluation is different), that there are some key lexical units, common to both descriptions (e.g. "he clings" — "I cling", "he is hanging" — "I am hanging", "mice, gnawing at my support" — "there is one support", "he looks round and sees" — "I look round and see", and so on). Until now the specialists saw in this "dream of Tolstoy" either a genuine record of a real dream, or a pure fiction. Now we may prove that the so-called "dream of Tolstoy" is without any doubt a creative revision of the Indian parable. But Tolstoy, as a philosopher of the Christian tradition (though a dissident, of course), discarded the world- renunciation ideology of the ancient tale, reversed the axiological attitudes, 'negated negation' and, as a result, reproduced on a new level the archaic image of the world, which had been the object of discreditation in the original Hindu- Buddhist parable. His brilliant intuition as a writer enabled him to penetrate into the deepest, latent, inexplicit layers of the parable's meaning, to revive its forgotten and hidden content. Tolstoy realized that the image of a man hanging in a tree or on a pole may be understood as symbolizing some mystical, religious experience. On the other hand, while describing the mechanism, the construction that he saw in his dream — the wooden pole, the ropes, the loop and so on — Tolstoy (quite unconsciously, I suppose) brought his readers back to the severe simplicity of the archaic rite.

After I had presented the first, Russian version of this paper, there appeared an article by V.V. Ivanov (Ivanov 1993), in which the author convincingly proved that two great Russian poets of the last century, Pushkin and Lermontov, in their poems describing a verbal contest (between steel and gold in Pushkin, between two Caucasian mountains in Lermontov) both authentically reproduced some archaic mythic and ritual patterns which, of course, could not be known to them. Now there can hardly be any doubt that such things sometimes happen to great writers. As to the mechanism making it possible, we can only hope that the answer will be given someday by psychology, which promises to be the most important science in the coming century.

NOTES

1. The author first dealt with this topic in 1988, in a paper submitted to the annual Spring Conference in Leningrad (St.- Petersburg) on "Traditional Indian Texts: Problems of Interpretation". The present article is based on the texts of two papers read (in English) at the International Sanskrit Conference in Jagellonian University (Krakow, Poland, Sept. 1993) and at the University of Münster (Germany, July 1994). A slightly different English version is to be published in: *Sihāpakaśrāddham: Prof. G.A. Zograph Commemorative Volume, St.-Petersburgh, 1995* (in press).

2. Recently "The Romance of Barlaam and Josaphat" has been studied anew by Vladimir Shokhin (Shokhin 1988: 37-157), who is quite convincing in his assertion that the Romance is wrongly called a "Christianised version of the Life of the Buddha"; in fact, it was from the very beginning a Christian text, written by Nestorian missionaries who consciously utilized some Buddhist themes in order to facilitate the acceptance of Christian doctrines by Indians. For details see a review of V. Shokhin's book (Vassilkov 1991).

3. For details of the world-tree pattern in different traditions see, e.g.: Kagarov 1929; Lechler 1937; Coomaraswamy 1938; Ellis Davidson 1964; Ivanov and Toporov 1965: 79-81.

4. This generalization is based on the data taken from such sources as: Anichkov 1903-05; Lechler 1937; Liungman 1941; Eliade 1971; Calendar rites 1977; Calendar rites 1978.

5. F. Staal, referring to the Vājapeya rite, which was performed in Poona in 1955, notices an important detail: when the ritual patron ("king") reaches the top, "he spreads his arms like the wings of the bird: (Staal 1991: 89); cf. the Garuḍa symbolism in the *carak-pūjā* (above) and the Vedic image of birds partaking "their share of *amṛta* at the top of the world-tree (below in the text of the article).

6. Remarkable survival of this pattern can be found in the late (although undoubtedly traceable to some archaic sources) system of Kuṇḍalinī yoga. In this system the old world-pattern is transferred to a human body which is viewed as a microcosm or a psychocosm, consisting of several 'wheels' (*cakra*), placed one above another along a vertical axis. The ascent of the 'serpent power' from one *cakra* to another is accomplished at the uppermost psychoenergetic centre at the crown of the head — the *sahasrara-cakra* which is the receptacle of *amṛta* and the source of bliss. In connection with the parable in question this fact is particularly meaningful: at least in one tradition of the Kuṇḍalinī yoga the name of the uppermost centre — *bhramara-cakra* (bee-wheel) bears the symbolism of bees or a beehive (Novotny 1958; Feuerstein 1990: 72).

7. See, e.g.: Filatova-Hellberg 1984.

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“ANYONE MIGHT BE A COMMUNIST”: HIGH NOON AND COLD WAR AMERICAN POLITICS

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“*High Noon*”, declared scriptwriter Carl Foreman in an interview several years after the movie’s release in 1952, is about “fear as it affects the community rather than one individual.”¹ The context of Foreman’s remark was the anti- communist hysteria in the years immediately following the Second World War, during what has been termed the ‘McCarthy Era’. With the institutional support of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the FBI, Joseph McCarthy, a relatively unknown Republican senator from Wisconsin, held a series of communist purges that transformed America from a democratic nation to a near-totalitarian state. In 1951, while still working on the script of *High Noon*, Foreman was subpoenaed by the HUAC for his Communist Party connections in the early forties. In the same year Alger Hiss, President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was jailed on suspicion of being a Soviet agent; while Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sentenced to death by Justice Irving Kaufman for passing defence secrets to Russia.² This paper is an attempt to read *High Noon* in terms of the Cold War ideology, as a politically subversive film rather than the classic Western that it is often considered to be.

II

In their 1969 editorial to *Cahiers du Cinema* Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni defined a politically subversive film as one which attacks the prevailing value-system by “a breaking down of the traditional way of depicting reality.” (Comolli and Narboni 1969: 26) ‘Reality’ as it is constituted in traditional cinema is not an objective and unmediated fact existing ‘out there’, captured and duplicated by the mechanical and hence impersonal agency of camera lens and film footage. It is “the vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought-out world of the dominant ideology.” (Comolli and Narboni 1969: 25) *High Noon*’s relation to the ideology in which it originated can be grasped by examining the ways in which it both reproduced and repudiated that ideology’s conventions. By ideology we are referring here to the system of beliefs fostered and circulated by institutional bodies like the HUAC and FBI

in order to consciously manipulate public opinion in a bid for legitimacy and power. We are also referring to the sedimentation of these beliefs in the popular mind into 'values' that became divested of their political charge and currency and assumed the nature of transcendent truths. The hyper-patriotism of the 1950s and the paranoia regarding communist subversives were not simply enforced by repressive state apparatuses: they were equally the perceptions of people who lived in a presumably open society and who did not see the HUAC and FBI as repressive. In other words, the ideology of the 1950s was the result of a complementarity between institutional imperatives and popular perceptions; and the result was not entirely symmetrical and monolithic for there were sites of dissent. Which brings us to our contention that *High Noon* was one such point of asymmetry.

III

High Noon, directed by Fred Zinnemann, was based on John N. Cunningham's "The Tin Star" which appeared in *Collier's* of 6 December 1947. The story is about an aged arthritic sheriff who is compelled by his conscience and his sense of duty to protect his town from outlaws. Jordan, whom Sheriff Doane had put away for murder, has been released and is returning by the afternoon train to take revenge. Doane is supported only by his deputy Toby: Staley, his other deputy, resigns and Mayor Mettrick withdraws support at the crucial moment. Doane's loneliness is heightened by his wife's recent death: his confrontation with the Jordan gang begins in fact when he goes to lay flowers at her grave. Herman Giesen's illustration of this scene for *Collier's* reinforces this sense of loneliness. The story ends with a bloody shoot-out in which both lawkeeper and the outlaws are killed and the young Toby inherits the mantle of his chief and father-figure. Cunningham's story transcribes several themes: individualism versus social conformity; the triumph of law and order over the forces of disruption; the vitality and freedom of nature versus the debilitating impact of industrialism. Doane's courage is amplified by contrast with the cowardice of Staley, Mettrick and the townspeople. Though the story begins by questioning the lawkeeper's badge of office — "a tin star" — it ends by glorifying the symbol as Toby sits beside the dead Doane holding his gun and star. Two recurrent images in the story are a lark flying in the sky and the train that brings Jordan. To Doane (and Cunningham) the lark symbolizes freedom: "... you're free inside. Like the larks." (Cunningham 1947: 64) The train, on the other hand, represents the destructive power of the machine, with its "whistle shriek[ing] ... like the ultimatum of an approaching conqueror."

(Cunningham 1947: 71) The confrontation between nature and industry — between the Garden and the Machine in terms of Leo Marx's dialectical explanation of postbellum American culture — is conveyed in the powerfully evocative scene where Jordan's brother shoots a lark. The contrast between nature and industry undergoes an anthropomorphic translation in the story, for Doane's humanness affiliates him with nature while the two Jordans are portrayed as automatons programmed to act in predictable ways. It is significant that the story is set in the late 1880s,³ when the evils of industrial capitalism became apparent for the first time in American history. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the Chicago Haymarket Riots of 1886 and a general unrest among the working classes were indications of the widening gap between labour and capital that was the outcome of a monopolistic and industrial capitalism.⁴ Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, published in 1888, attempted to assuage fears by looking forward into a future when the logical outcome of capitalism would be a socialist world regulated by capitalist ethics. Cunningham's "The Tin Star" is in this sense a historical narrative and, like all historical narratives, is predicated on a dialogic encounter of past and present.⁵ The 1880s were a period of fervent socialist activity, triggering off conservative fears of a communist take-over; in 1947 these fears were magnified to such an extent that Alabama outlawed the Communist Party and President Truman's Labor Secretary Lewis Schwollenbach demanded that the entire nation follow suit.⁶ "The Tin Star" thus appropriated history in order to express concerns which were contemporary. Its articulation of these concerns, however, is deeply ambiguous: on the one hand it seems to denounce capitalism by privileging nature over industry, while on the other it is anti-populist and thus legitimizes the capitalist ethics of individualism. It apparently undermines a judicial system by which law-breakers are left off. "You risk your life catching somebody," complains Doane to his deputy, "and the damned juries let them go so they can come back and shoot you." (Cunningham 1947: 11) Yet ultimately its Manichean dialectic of good versus evil is affirmed and the outlaws are eliminated while Doane comes alive again through a regenerated Toby. Doane's heroism and refusal to conform to public opinion may be seen as analogous to Carl Foreman's and Arthur Miller's refusal to buckle under HUAC pressure tactics: yet it is also remarkably similar to Billy Graham's perception of Joseph McCarthy and his followers "who, in the face of public denouncement and ridicule, go loyally on in their work of exposing the pinks, the lavenders, and the reds who have sought refuge beneath the wings of the American eagle."⁷

IV

In adapting "The Tin Star" for the movie, Carl Foreman made many significant changes. The name of the town where the action takes place is not mentioned in Cunningham's story; Foreman's use of the name "Hadleyville", as Don Graham argues, is significant: "behind Hadleyville stands another small town in American culture, Mark Twain's Hadleyburg." (Graham 1979: 55) *High Noon* features recurrent shots of this name prominently displayed on signboards. On the basis of this evidence Graham rightly argues a "meaningful connection" between the film and Twain's satirical story of 1899. But when he goes on to interpret this link in terms of the archetype of the "Hypocritical Community", he slips into an apolitical stance that denies cultural meanings while asserting that cinema is a cultural artefact. In fact, Graham promotes a reading of *High Noon* that underplays its political meaning, on the somewhat dubious ground that the film appeals to "audiences born after the Cold War who associate Korea with a vague Congressional scandal if they associate it with anything at all." (Graham 1979: 53)⁸

To interpret Twain's depiction of small-town hypocrisy in Hannibal or Hadleyburg as a contrast between the ideal community and actual society is to miss the entire point of his social critique. It argues a nostalgia for the lost origin, a mystification that was clearly alien to the social realism of Twain's later writings. "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" is a much more complex text than such readings would assume, for it questions not just the value of the Gilded Age but its dominant explanation-form as well. We will cite two brief instances of this explanation-form: Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History". Both Bellamy's projection of the organic community into the late twentieth century and Turner's perception of such a community in the "primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier" (Turner 1893: 2) are predicated on a binarism of primitive/modern and simple/complex that resolves itself into an ultimately ethical distinction. In terms of this distinction, primitivism is more appealing because it is seen as the basis of 'natural' social relations. Thus, Turner's reading of American history is based on the myth of "perennial rebirth", a figuration for the lost origin that American society is somehow poised to retrieve while achieving technological progress. Bellamy's *Looking Backward* is the fictional fulfilment of this magic teleology: the complex structure of "The Great Trust" is founded on economic relations that are essentially simple and an advanced corporate capitalism seeks its rationale in a primitive barter system. "Humanity has burst the chrysalis", declares Mr.

Barton in *Looking Backward*. “The heavens are before it.” (Bellamy 1888: 239) Though they begin by glorifying the simple and primitive life, Bellamy and Turner ultimately abandon it in favour of progress and their images of the American millenium are shot through with contradictions. “The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg”, by exposing the inauthenticity of the town’s untested virtue, renders the constructs of orthodox morality problematic. It questions the notion of virtue by revealing its conventional nature: the purport of the opening paragraph is to show how these conventions, through ideological process, “harden and solidify” into self-evident truths. (Twain 1899: 1253) This scepticism informs the closure: the town changes its name, and its motto from “LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION” to “LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION”. (Twain 1899: 1289) Thereby it not only changes its perception of truth but also grasps the provisionality of such perceptions. While providing a formal ending to the narrative, the closure thus actually denies the comforting resolution that an explanation-form depends on. Further, Twain’s story also points to the tendency towards naturalization that narrative — whether fictional or historical — always employs and which is its driving logic. On learning of the stranger’s visit, Richards exclaims: “‘Why, it’s a romance; it’s like the impossible things one reads about in books, and never sees in life.’” (Twain 1899: 1256) The reference here is to the gap between reality and the representation of reality — to the fact that discourse, in striving for intelligibility, resolves reality into a coherent and continuous whole. By way of its allusion to Twain’s story, *High Noon* engages with these ideas.

V

Till now we have approached *High Noon* tangentially, through other texts that bear upon it. Returning to *High Noon*’s adaptation of Cunningham’s story, we see how it interacts with the latter through strategic distortion and reorientation of meaning. Explicit textual differences like change of names and the deletion and addition of episodes constitute one sign of such distortion. The more important aspect, however, is its textual construction of reality. Cunningham’s “The Tin Star”, we have argued, is ambivalent in its expression of the dominant ideology. Foreman’s *High Noon* plays upon this ambivalence to bring its contradictions to the fore. First, the valorization of nature which is fundamental to the romantic myth of the frontier and to the genre of the Western that it gave rise to. In *High Noon*, we notice the near-total absence of the landscape that is one of the hallmarks of the Western. Instead, the camera recurrently focusses on the streets and storefronts through close-ups and pans.⁹ The point becomes

clear when we compare *High Noon* with, say, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, where most of the action takes place in the open. The contrast between nature and industry *does not* in fact constitute a critique of capitalism; for the fetishization of nature is first a means of commodifying it as a saleable text and also a concealment of industry's modes of exploiting it. By refusing to thus fetishize nature, *High Noon* distances itself from its ideological moment. Secondly, the individual/community dichotomy that Cunningham's story expresses: like "The Tin Star", *High Noon* expresses this dichotomy ambivalently. At one level it is a repudiation of Cold War conservatism and patriotic adherence to the community's (or nation's) values. Marshall Kane's antagonists are the townspeople as much as the Miller gang, and his heroism is enacted against their cowardice and hypocrisy. This is the meaning that Foreman evidently had in mind when he scripted the movie. At another level, however, it confirms individualism and its underlying ideology of private enterprise and thus validates what it sets out to critique. This is a telling example of how the film unwittingly subscribes to the code of the Western hero while simultaneously problematizing it, for instance, by having Kane declare that he is actually no hero. Close-ups of Gary Cooper reveal fear, especially as the time for Miller's arrival draws close. Finally, the Western's Manichean separation of good and evil and the ultimate triumph of the law is undermined by Kane's act of throwing his sheriff's badge to the dust. As John Wayne rightly noted, though for a different reason, it was "the most un-American thing I've ever seen in my whole life."¹⁰ Cunningham's "The Tin Star" begins by questioning the symbol of authority but ends by redeeming it to the status of unquestionable truth. By adding a final twist to the tale, Foreman's adaptation succeeds in focussing its critique of the ideology both of the classic Western and of postwar America.

The political subtext of *High Noon* questions the notion of consensus, which was the predominant feature of Cold War American ideology. Joseph McCarthy was not the enforcer of this consensus, he was its logical product. *High Noon* reveals how the forces of this consensus were located in the popular mind as well as institutional sites like business, the law and especially the church. The opposition to Kane includes, significantly, a judge, a businessman and a priest. The subversive impact of the film can be understood by comparing it with *On The Waterfront*, which Budd Schulberg scripted and Elia Kazan directed partly to appease the HUAC and partly to justify their own acts of testifying before the Committee. In *Waterfront*, Terry Malloy is urged to testify against the union bosses by the detectives from the Crime Commission and by Father Barry, representing the authorities of church and state. Malloy's act of

exposing Johnny Friendly is an act of yielding to the consensus, but the movie justifies it as a heroic gesture that is at first misunderstood by his co-workers yet ultimately receives their approval.¹¹

“‘Anyone might be a Communist, just as anyone might have a hidden disease’”, declares Nero Wolfe, the private eye in one of Rex Stout’s stories.¹² The metaphor of disease served the function of marginalizing communism by depicting it as a perversion of the body politic. The opposition between communism and capitalism, which was a political one, could thus be depoliticized and rendered in terms of a disease/health or deviant/normal paradigm. By questioning the authority of law to preside over good and evil, *High Noon* subverts the ideological convention underlying this paradigm. Of course, it does not deal explicitly with communism and seeks neither to deny nor confirm it. But by appropriating the form of the classic Western which was a distillation of key American values and undermining its codes from within, *High Noon* succeeds as a forceful critique of the culture that generated it and to which it bore a relationship of assymetry and dissent.

NOTES

1. “An Interview with Carl Foreman”, *Sight and Sound* (Summer 1958): 220. Cited in Graham 1979: 54.

2. For a detailed account of Cold War ideology and the political events that shaped it, see Whitfield, 1991.

3. Cunningham’s story describes Cecilia Doane’s grave as “one of the newer ones” (Cunningham 1947: 69) and gives the year of her death as 1885. From this we may infer that the story is set in the late 1880s.

4. See Trachtenberg, 1982: 70-100.

5. In *Tropics of Discourse* Hayden White argues that history can provide “an awareness of how the past could be used to effect an ethically responsible transition from present to future.” (White 1978: 49) That is, the role of history is to mediate between the past and the present so as to reveal the dynamics of *change* and not of a putative continuity or linear development. History, therefore, loses its validity when it focusses on the past as an inert generative model for the present or future. It is important to note that White, like Foucault, conceives of history as moments of transition, of

paradigm shifts rather than a continuous process of evolution directed towards an end. It is in this sense that the past and present come into a dialogic encounter and the past becomes coordinate with, not subordinated to, the present.

6. See Whitfield 1991: 45-46.

7. Quoted in Whitfield 1991: 45.

8. While Graham's approach is valid at the level of preliminary textual analysis in order to simplify the text and render it comprehensible, it does not show how the text is a product of a specific historical moment. Its disengagement from politics and history serves to reify the text as a timeless object of art.

9. The few long shots in the film are those of the Miller gang bearing down upon Hadleyville and of the railway track, both emphasizing the inevitability with which Miller seeks revenge. In *High Noon* landscape does not connote the freedom of the frontier, as it does in the traditional Western.

10. Interview by *Playboy* (May 1971): 90. Cited in Lenihan 1980: 23.

11. For a detailed discussion of *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront* as well as other politically-oriented movies of the period, see Whitfield 1991: 127-52. and Christensen 1987: 85-109.

12. Stout 1951: 295.

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Aijaz Ahmad's Critique of Edward Said

Tejwant Singh Gill

Edward Said¹ is the foremost third world thinker writing from within the first world. During the last two decades adoration and denigration have come to him in equal measure from academic and intellectual quarters. The circumspect critique that his globally known book *Orientalism* 1978 (OR) has engaged from sympathetic readers matches the circumscriptive censure drawn from its unsympathetic detractors. *The Question of Palestine* 1979 (QP) and *Covering Islam* 1981 (CI) have not gone unnoticed though their approach to the subject is rather biased. The perceptive exchange that *The World, the Text and the Critic* 1983 (WTC) occasioned in a couple of issues of *Diacritics* is in line with the recognition his writings usually get in the aftermath of their publication.

Even his occasional papers — “Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community” 1982 (OACC), “An Ideology of Difference” 1985 (ID) and “Representing the Colonised: Anthropology’s Interlocutors” 1989 (RCAI) published in *Critical Inquiry* provoked strong reactions and rejoinders. Immediately on publication, *Culture and Imperialism* 1993 (CAI) saw an acrimonious debate spilling over several issues of *The Times Literary Supplement*. That *After the Last Sky* 1986 (ALS) and *Musical Elaborations* 1991 (ME) would arouse engagements commensurate with the cultural shading of national life in the one and the intellectual rigour of aesthetic sort in the other is a fair and just prognostication.

I

For all their engaging interest and involvement, these reactions, rejoinders, arguments and objections are limited in extent and scope. Their limitation seems all the more conspicuous beside the elaborate critique mounted upon Said’s dominant discourse by Aijaz Ahmad, an Indian-born third world Marxist academic and intellectual. Spread over almost a quarter of his penetrating book *In Theory*² (IT) this trenchant critique does not have elaboration alone as its essential forte. It also has an aspiration to get original as much in the metaphorical sense of being distinct as in the etymological sense of going to the roots or origin of Said’s passionate but polemical and reflective but-deflective discourse. Theoretically, Aijaz Ahmad’s critique carries the poten-

tial of holding Said's discourses in a seamless and open-ended counterpoint reserving astonishing fecundity for itself. In such a counterpoint, as Said has so meticulously put, "various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organised interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work." (CAI 59-60) In actual practice, however, Aijaz Ahmad's critique dispenses with concert and order or the organised interplay by pin-pointing the weakest spots for assault. If not marred, it gets mired for not realizing itself through what Antonio Gramsci has in all candidness termed "scrupulous accuracy, scientific honesty and intellectual loyalty". There are in fact preoccupations of the ideological-cum-personal sort which, to put in Gramsci's cogent words, do not let him "study deeply but without succumbing to the fascination of the system or the author under study."³

Implicit in this view is also the fact that by becoming the reverse side of fascination of the system or the author under study, detraction may deprive a study of qualities Gramsci held so essential. This distraction seems to have overtaken Aijaz Ahmad as well in whom Said's splendid success in the academic circles of the first world sounds pejorative. No less detractive is the claim to be derived from Raymond Williams' generous review of *The World, the Text and the Critic* to the effect that Said through his critical discourse not only states but also substantiates emergent thinking. That this is not a conjecture simply to be set aside becomes evident from the trajectory of preclusion, inclusion and exclusion bearing upon the subject of his study.

The subject of Aijaz Ahmad's study is Said's dominant discourse chiefly in *Orientalism* from which his earlier and later writings are hermetically sealed. The "essentially cerebral character of that earlier prose—in which not much more than the mind is engaged" is stated as the reason for precluding *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* 1966 (JCFA) and *Beginning: Intention and Method* 1975 (BIM) from his critique. Anything worthwhile for engagement in these earlier texts is further dismissed with the summary contention that "the mind then seemed actually to have believed that when it comes to intellectual inquiry even in the human sciences, nothing except the mind need be engaged." (IT 162) When the stage is reached for excluding Said's later writings as *After the Last Sky* in particular then a summary praise of its "superbly inflected prose" (IT 161) is sufficient for the purpose.

Supposing a grain of truth to be there in the generous view of Raymond Williams⁴ whom Aijaz Ahmad has poignantly admired as "always cautious and as always reluctant to press too far beyond thresholds of existing convic-

tions" (IT 48), it would have not behoved him to exercise the trajectory of preclusion, inclusion and exclusion in a rather cavalier way. No wonder it risks slippage to the positivist grid that ill behoves a dialectical-materialist of Aijaz Ahmad's orientation. His turning to certain peripheral articles as on common-wealth literature and subaltern studies renders his slippage no less crucial. After all, they do not authenticate Said's emergent discourses as authoritatively as do his later writings or celebrated articles on the problematics of literary criticism, the ideology of difference and the interlocation of anthropology.

No wonder Aijaz Ahmad expropriates from his critique the qualities Antonio Gramsci held so essential. Admirably enough they largely define this study of diverse subjects in the rest of the book including his chapters on Frederic Jameson and Salman Rushdie. Instead the expropriation to which he is led to resort matches the appropriation that Said has employed of another aspect of Gramsci for his own discourse. He waxes eloquent over his choice of *Orientalism* as central to his critique. The crux of this choice, as he eloquently avers, lies in the radical break marked by Said's definition of his scholarly project. Said also underlines this radical break though his interpretation of it is existential as against its academic side flaunted by Aijaz Ahmad. He ties it to Said's attempt "at coming to terms with what it meant for him to be a Palestinian living and teaching in the U.S.A., armed with not much more than a humanist intellectual training, a successful career as literary critic and a splendid mastery over wide areas of European literary textuality." (IT 161) To underline his personal experience, for writing *Orientalism*, Said appropriates Gramsci's idea of the inventory of traces so as to redirect it into the existential direction. As he holds in a rather evocative vein, "The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanising ideology, holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny." (OR 27)

For Aijaz Ahmad, the original Gramscian idea of an inventory of traces presumes that "there is a personality, a cultural location, upon which those traces are inscribed; it presumes ~~that there are~~ other traces into which these traces are woven; so that the personality that emerges out of this weave, this over-lap is conditioned not by a specific set of traces but by the whole of history." (IT 161) No doubt Aijaz Ahmad's elaboration seeks to reflect the diverse nuances of the Gramscian idea sanctioning layers of experience beneath those settling in the course of time. For all this elaboration, his approval of it remains problematic if not ambiguous.

The proof of this may be gathered from the expropriating course he sets on vis-a-vis Gramsci's idea, in the first instance by passing on it a neutral value

judgement. The burden of this neutral value judgement is: "Histories, and therefore subjectivities, are constituted not by what Gramsci calls moments but by the always-accumulating process of sedimentation and accretion." (IT 172) In the second instance, he overlooks the fact that Gramsci does not regard this temporal process as essentially historical. The historical process represents for him "a unity in time through which the present contains the whole of the past and in the present is realised that part of the past which is essential — with no residue of any unknowable representing the true essence." To dispense with any vagueness that may be constructed therefrom and opposite meanings deconstructed, Gramsci further holds, "The past which is lost i.e. not transmitted dialectically in the historical process, was in itself of no import, casual and contingent dross, chronicle and not history, a superficial and negligible episode in the last analysis."⁵

In the third instance, Aijaz Ahmad is not at pains to see how for Gramsci sedimentation and accretion get implanted in the common sense of the people vis-a-vis the good sense of the intellectuals. In the latter is realized only the essential part of the residue resulting from that sedimentation and accretion. Before his incarceration, Gramsci categorized intellectuals as either traditional or organic. While languishing in jail, he overlapped it with religious versus secular categorization. For him, the traditional/religious intellectuals tended to direct the common sense of the people towards a milieu in the past or a vision of life lurking in the transcendent horizon. Their organic/secular counterparts sought to redirect it towards the present state of human existence and its prospective reorientation in the future. Before his incarceration, Gramsci under the impact of such Ciceronian thinkers as Machiavelli, Marx and Lenin stressed the traditional versus organic episode. Later on persuaded by Socratic thinkers of the sort of Vico, De Sanctis and Labriola, he had the religious versus secular distinction exercise a greater hold over his mind. But so fecund was his contrapuntal thinking that he did not hermeticize these categories. This claim is unlikely to hold so far as these two contenders go. As against Said to whose appropriative sense the latter distinction is so veritable, for the expropriative nature of Aijaz Ahmad neither is in fact efficacious enough.

Gramsci visualized the weave or the overlap as oriented towards the national-popular convergence. Of course he realized the contingency of divergence from that, but he did not regard it as essential. Aware of passions covering human life through community, creed, class, region and religion he could uncover national aspirations impelling, thwarting or even compelling popular feelings. No wonder the national-popular became for him a paradigm of

thinking and feeling. Of course, canonical nationalism repelled him but the interplay of hegemony i.e. persuasion and force, learning and teaching and coordination and subordination likely to result in a national-popular specificity held a great charm over his dialogical and contrapuntal mind.

For Aijaz Ahmad national specificity can only be of the canonical kind without exception. In decrying it he goes even beyond Benedict Anderson who, while finding it a political construct, decodes therein the presence of the imagined community. While encoding it he contends, "the feelings and aspirations of the people go abundantly at a particular historical juncture."⁶ Maybe Aijaz Ahmad's decrying of national specificity as nothing beyond canonical nationalism has resulted from the marginalization of his religious brethren, the Muslim people in India. Submerged under his ideological commitment, Aijaz Ahmad's structure of feeling resonates with that of Ghalib marked by "cosmic doubt of subcontinental consciousness"⁷. Since their marginalization gets more precarious with the further spread of communalism albeit fundamentalism all around, he is constrained to preclude/exclude from his purview the problematics of the national-popular specificity. This is another instance of expropriation of Gramsci from the scope of his critique at the cost of scrupulous accuracy, scientific honesty and intellectual loyalty.

II

Without delving into all the layers of Gramsci's idea of the inventory of traces, Aijaz Ahmad reciprocates Said's drawing on his impulse for "an equally personal and more nuanced undertaking" (IT 161). To award civilizational proportions to this personal and more nuanced undertaking, Said takes Erich Auerbach as his authorial paradigm. Acutely understanding of this aspect of Said, Aijaz Ahmad writes, "Auerbach is the emblem of scholarly rectitude, a lone figure defending humanist value in the middle of holocaust, a scholar in the finest sense; also a surrogate this figure of an ultimate scholar writing his masterpiece in exile has, for Said the stateless Palestinian and the ambitious author of *Orientalism*, a very special resonance." Since the specific inventory of traces i.e. racism, cultural moulding, political imperialism and dehumanizing ideology stamps upon Said his uniquely punishing destiny, so "outside this particular narrative of personal desolation and perseverance", Auerbach becomes for him, "the master of European knowledge" against which was to be assembled the counter-knowledge of his book. In this way, *Orientalism* has behind itself the trail of a strong ambition "to write a counter-history that could be posed against *Mimesis*, Auerbach's magisterial account of the seamless

genesis of European realism and rationalism from Greek antiquity to the present moment.” (IT 163)

Aijaz Ahmad hardly overlooks any aspect of Said's impulse for taking Auerbach as his authorial paradigm. At the same time, he is fully aware of the facts of ambition to have lured him to turn his own book into an anti-model of Auerbach's masterpiece. This lure was for the Discourse Theory of Foucault whom early in the book Said invokes as his mentor. He comes up with the unequivocal contention that without examining Orientalism as a discourse i.e. as defined by Foucault, “one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage —and even produce —the Orient, politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-enlightenment period.” (OR 3) Aijaz Ahmad does not fail to testify that Said's sense of intellectual affiliation nowhere flags, from the beginning to the book's end. Throughout it remains “replete with Foucauldian terminology: regularity, discursive field, representation, archive, epistemic, difference and so on.” (IT 165)

What Aijaz Ahmad fails to testify to is that Said's intellectual affiliation with Foucault is the other side of his academic fascination with Auerbach. Auerbach's project was tied to his perspective of showing how from the antiquity to the modern times, consistency of experience, thinking and feeling has, for all the angst, ennui and pain, inhered Western civilization. As he put it in his magnificent book *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, “European civilisation is approaching the term of its existence; its history as a distinct entity would seem to be at an end, for already it is beginning to be engulfed in another, more comprehensive unity. Today however European civilisation is still a living reality within the range of our perception.”⁸ Said's purpose in *Orientalism* is to show that Western civilization has nowhere adhered to these norms in its perception of Eastern life.

Foucault's discursive methodology' operating through such terms as regularity, discursive field, representation, archive, epistemic and difference was ready at hand. Nothing could be more useful to him to complete his anti-project from within the first world. To limit Said's response to the methodological extent is however a misnomer. He is indebted to his French mentor for crystallizing the imagination of power particularly from “the standpoint of its actual realisation”. No wonder his emphasis upon “the productivity of power, its provocative inventiveness and generative ingenuity” seems to provide a deeper insight to Said into its oppressive potential than the traditional categories of appropriation, expropriation and exploitation etc. This

deeper insight makes him aware of a particular lack in Foucault, i.e. of "emergent or alternative consciousness" so poignantly articulated by Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams. As Said states it so well, "for Gramsci and Williams, the analysis of discursive power is made coeval with an image of what we could describe as contingent power, the principle of whose constitution is that, since it is constructed by humans, it is therefore not invincible, not impervious to dismantling, not unidirectional."⁹ Creditably enough he has not only stated his preference for this deeper insight but has also substantiated it in *After the Last Sky*. For studying Palestinian life in this book, he has not to appropriate the categories so subtly employed by his alternative mentors. His is a mediated use of their categories at an alien terrain holding out their more fecund prospect.

While going into the prospect of a mediated as distinct from this juxtapositive project, Aijaz Ahmad expresses his perplexity at the untenable grid upon which Said's intellectual affiliation with Foucault seems to rest at that juncture. Articulating his perplexity, he states, "Yet one is not quite sure what the relationship between Said's thought and Foucault's really is." Rather than stop at its generic statement, he tries to substantiate it further—but why through Foucault's agreement and disagreement with Marxism does not seem clear. So he feels like leaving aside Foucault's questionable propositions that Marx was not firmly located within the Western episteme and that historical narrativization is not possible at the twin sites of the state and the economic production, singularly of so originating significance for his philosophy of Historical Materialism. Leaving his perplexity as at that, he is drawn to Foucault's resurfacing in Said's thought and its irreconcilable merger into Auerbach's perspective. He is perceptive enough to conclude, "If Foucault's pressures force him to trace the beginnings of Orientalist Discourse from the eighteenth century or so, the equally irresistible pressures of Auerbachian High Humanism force him to trace the origins of this very discourse in the conventional form of a continuous European Literary textuality, all the way back to Ancient Greece." (IT 166)

According to Aijaz Ahmad, the consequences of these irreconcilable but at the same time irresistible pressures are not far from evident. Said refuses to choose, rather he demonstratively offers to give mutually incompatible definitions of Orientalism. Taking a rather anti-Foucauldian position, he traces the ideology of modern imperialist Eurocentrism back to the ancient times so as to draw a trans-historical trajectory of the orientalist attitude. This in general conforms to the methodology of the Auerbachian perspective. That in the process it goes against the grain of Auerbach's occidental epistemology and

even ontology does not exasperate him. So that the anti-Auerbachian stance may not lag behind, Said then traces the beginning of this imperialist Eurocentrism to the eighteenth century, intriguingly enough to the very sites of the state — the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, the French occupation of North Africa, the Anglo-French rivalries in the Levant etc. — which the Foucauldian position would disqualify as its constituting and constitutive factors. So to Aijaz Ahmad it seems that Said “duplicates all these procedures even as he debunks the very tradition from which he has borrowed them.” Inevitably, “a very personal kind of drama” gets enacted in “Said’s procedure of alternately debunking and praising to the skies and again debunking the same book as if he had been betrayed by the objects of his passion.” (IT 168)

Due to this justification between the Auerbachian perspective and the Foucauldian focus, Aijaz Ahmad locates “a popular disjuncture in the architecture of the book” (IT 172). This leads to an eclecticism between “the three — mutually incompatible — definitions of the term Orientalism” (IT 179), deployed by Said. The first rests on the academic vocation of a person teaching, writing about and researching the Orient. In the first definition, according to Said, one becomes an orientalist — “whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian or philologist” (OR 2) by working in the Orient and thereby advancing the cause of Orientalism. In the second definition, Orientalism is a “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident” (OR 3) — “it becomes much more”, far exceeding academic boundaries — indeed a mentality traversing a great many centuries, if not a full scale epistemology. (IT 179) In the third definition, it emerges as a post-Enlightenment phenomenon, when with the eighteenth century “as a roughly defined starting-point” Orientalism grew as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient” — in short, Orientalism is a Western style “for dominating, restructuring, and having authority” (OR 3) over it.

With regard to the first definition Aijaz Ahmad remains ambiguous. He does not succinctly hold that it is not so much meant to challenge veracity as it is purported to counter efficacy of Orientalism. After all in his considered moments Said knows it for certain that a scholar does not get reduced to the field of his study. Jean-Pierre Vernant for whose work he has great regard does not become a mythologist simply because his whole work relates to the study of Greek mythology. Likewise, Christopher Hill does not become a bourgeois nationalist simply because his life-long work relates to the turmoil of seventeenth century England. It is on record that orientalists like Bernard Lewis, openly serving the cause of imperialism, have tried to spite Said. On filmay

grounds like whether he knows of a particular medieval Arabic dictionary or the meaning of a specific word in the whole range of Arabic lexicography, Bernard Lewis has also cast aspersions on his competence to raise basic questions about the veracity of Orientalism. In finding fault with Said's definition Aijaz Ahmad does not, of course, side with orientalist of the ilk of Bernard Lewis whose competence is purely of the technical sort. At the same time, he does not rate Said above the level his detractors consign him to because of his offence at "one of the disagreeable surprises in Orientalism that it refuses to acknowledge that vast tradition, virtually as old as colonialism itself, which has existed in the colonized countries as well as among the metropolitan left traditions, and has always been occupied, precisely, with drawing up an inventory of colonial traces in the minds of the people on both sides of the colonial divide." (IT 174)

III

No far as the second and third definitions go, the discord animating them is really of crucial importance. With creditable insight, Aijaz Ahmad has brought it out by locating it in the irreconcilable conflict between the Auerbachian perspective and the Foucauldian focus. His raising it to the level of a hiatus in the architecture of the book is also praiseworthy. What he has not troubled to visualize is the accord/discord that the Other as the crux of the second definition and the Orient of the third have borne in the Western and no less so in the Eastern world. To specify with an example from the Panjab that like Palestine has suffered conflict and confluence, the Other has been a basic category of knowing, feeling, behaving, enfranchizing and de-enfranchizing all along in the course of history. The Greeks, Huns, Mongols, Mughals etc. resorted to it as much as the native people, of the indigenous or the converted kind. It was thus through the prism of the Other that Megasthenes, accompanying Alexander the Great all the way from ancient Greece, found the tribals living on this side of the Indus, copulating like animals. Likewise, the prism of the Other impelled Alberuni who accompanied Mahmud Ghaznavi to rate them better than his predecessor. Nevertheless, he saw their ultimate well-being only in their conversion to Islam.

With these responses were singular so as to warrant between the Other and the Orient an accord of a sort. However, more sober and subtle were the responses which grew from within the Panjab. The first response was of Sheikh Farid (1173-1265) who as an ardent believer in *The Koran* should have held to its discourse of power and as a proto-orientalist advocated the conversion

of the Panjabi people to the tenets of Islam. This was not to be so in actual practice for his existential affiliation came in the way of doctrinal filiation. No wonder out of more than a hundred couplets (dohas) in which he composed his sacral poetry,⁹ only a couple exhort his disciples to act upon the Koranic precepts. It is all the same problematic to hold whether their discourse is of power in the Koranic sense.

Descended from Arabia as a devout votary of *The Koran*, the addresser in these couplets would normatively have found the addressee as typical of the people of the Panjab i.e. the Orient. However, actual affiliation gets the better of doctrinal filiation with the result that the human concern for salvation comes to the centre of Sheikh Farid's poetic discourse. It displaces the political concern for civic life so vehemently inscribed in *The Koran*. From a civic or worldly male the interlocutor of this poetic discourse becomes a married female who has a short duration of life at her disposal. Rather than look without and find fault with the world, she is required to search within herself. Instead of retaliation sanctioned by the proto-Orientalism of *The Koran*, she professes humility sanctified by non-violence. In the course of practising this non-violence, the human being is persuaded to realize the significance of pining that results in the perception of universal suffering. As a result of this perception, God assures salvation having nothing to do with the Koranic interlocution. This assurance is a guarantee of God's benediction not to forsake the human being even though he may forsake Him.

Thus Sheikh Farid's affiliative claim upon the people of the Panjab, that to Arabia the land of his doctrinal filiation might have seemed the Orient, laid the basis of Sufism. Through a process of dissent as it were, his Sufi outlook found the doctrinaire votary of *The Koran* as the Other, a position he could recede from only by renouncing his doctrinal filiation for existential affiliation.

This dissent growing from Panjabi life got hegemonic in Guru Nanak (1469-1539),¹¹ the founder of the Sikh faith. Guru Nanak sought to supersede the conflict between the Aryan Hindu civilization, for long regarded as universal and absolute by the Indian people, and the invading Islam which by its very otherness, apart from its political prowess, induced in the Indian mind a feeling of unprecedented fear of animus against those who had brought it into their midst. For this purpose he identified the Other at several levels. For example, he visualized God (*Wahe Guru*) as the idealized image of suffering humanity particularly on the terrain of the Panjab, so as to transfigure all fears, pains and ordeals into an ordained faith. Simultaneously transcendent and immanent, *Wahe Guru* distinguished Himself from the *Allah* of *The Koran* that as the authorized image of the conquering people of Arabia was marked

by authoritarian transcendence. Guru Nanak's *Wahe Guru* was also distinct from the *Isvara* of the Upanisads to which the age-long acquiescence of Aryan Hindu civilization had awarded passive and sensual proportions.

Guru Nanak like Sheikh Farid before him sought to push his awareness of the Other towards the unconsciousness of relating and sharing. The Western mind taken up with Orientalism could not, with Guru Nanak's sense of difference, take cognizance of his human and humane concerns. Ernest Trumpp, for example, a nineteenth century German orientalist working in the Panjab, Sindh and other north-western areas of India, contended that "he was not a speculative philosopher at all." In his essay *Sketch of Religion of the Sikhs*, he further reiterated, "Nanak was by no means an independent thinker. ... he followed in all essential points the common Hindu philosophy of those days and especially his predecessor Kabir who was at that time a popular man in India and whose writings, which were composed in the vulgar tongue, were accessible to the unlearned masses."¹²

No doubt Guru Nanak, like his predecessor, sought to signify in his compositions forming a seminal part of the *Adi Granth* the motifs of the union of the human with the Divine, the transitory nature of life and the false sense of prowess claimed by those in authority. He achieved this signification through the residual paradigm of the four stages of life, retribution and rewards for deeds done, ascetic exercises and the cycle of transmigration. Like Kabir he also crusaded the dominant paradigm of man-woman relation, caste-system, observance of rituals and the pursuit of power and pelf. Both of them so subverted the accepted efficacy and sanctified veracity of these motifs that the listener/reciter/reader felt transported into an alternative realm of awareness.

There were areas of thought and experience in which Guru Nanak marked an advance upon Kabir. He envisioned the Divine as the creator both in the transcendent and immanent form. In the process, he visualized the universe in all its spatial infinity while his predecessor could claim only an empirical view of it. Guru Nanak shared this awareness with the Renaissance thinkers of the Occident. It was indeed amazing for a man of the Orient to thus share awareness with the likes of Copernicus and Galileo.

Guru Nanak, like Kabir, was a trenchant critic of the civic society. Accumulation, aggrandisement and exploitation came in handy to both for a vehement critique the like of which is rarely found in the rest of Bhakti kavya. Guru Nanak marked an advance upon Kabir by forwarding as vehement a critique of the polity. Most poignant was the critique that he recorded of Babur's invasion of India. It was again reserved for Guru Nanak to raise his voice against the suppression of the womankind as ordained in the *Manusmṛti*.

The specific nature of response to the Other vis-a-vis the Orient which Sheikh Farid and Guru Nanak forwarded from within the Panjab raises crucial problems for both Edward Said and Aijaz Ahmad. Edward Said, disposed to subsume the multiple connotation of the Other into the singular denotation of the Orient, has held self-representation as secondary/subordinate to representation. The poetic compositions of Sheikh Farid and Guru Nanak when put beside the observations of Megasthenes and Alberuni, forward a powerful refutation of what those chroniclers recorded of the life in the Panjab bearing several similarities with Palestine. Their plea for alternative awareness affiliates itself retrospectively with the human concerns of Herodotus and Euripides who contested the dominant view of power as advocated by Plato and Aristotle. Prospectively, its affiliation is with the emergent consciousness of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams who have underlined the scope of alternative acts and intentions.

The example of Megasthenes lends credence to Edward Said's contention that even in the ancient times the West was not averse to some sort of an Orientalist disposition. Homer, of course, was not aware of any distinction between the Orient and the West, for his autochthonous heroes were swayed only by personal glory and victory. Aeschylus was, however, taken up with this distinction and he magnified it enough by raising it from the archaic to the ethnic level. Likewise, Plato marked its presence in the realm of political philosophy. In the *Republic* he had no compunction in asserting that the orientals lacked "the governing element of the soul" in contrast to "the love of knowledge"¹³ the Greeks had in abundance. At the same time, he was not disposed to carrying this distinction to the extent of a categorical imperative, for in more than one place he ridiculed it with all the precision at his command. As against that, Aristotle was an ardent orientalist. He regarded the orientals as beastly for they lived without and outside the polis. To all intents and purposes, its veracity and efficacy precluded their perception. "Deficient in spirit", they seemed to him to be "peoples of subjects and slaves". As such they were inferior to the Greeks who possessed "spirit and intelligence"¹⁴ in an abundant measure. In Victor Ehrenberg's words, it was this distinction that impelled Aristotle to advise Alexander "to be hegemon to the Greeks and a despot to the barbarians". He was in short advised "to look after the former as after friends and relatives and to deal with the latter as with beasts or plants."¹⁵

Strangely enough, Edward Said keeps himself oblivious of the opposite disposition of Euripides and Herodotus. Though not central and dominant as the disposition represented by Aeschylus, Plato and above all Aristotle, it was not altogether marginal and ephemeral as well. The subtlety along with sobriety which Euripides brought on the problematics of the Greek versus the oriental is worthy of emulation for even such profound scholars as Jean-Pierre Vernant and Maxime Rodinson. The most moving exploration of this problematic is to be found in *Medea*¹⁶ in which the heroine, an oriental by implication, broke off all filiative bonds to instal herself with her Greek lover. She was deeply estranged from him when partly from an egoistic and partly from an altruistic motive, he arranged to marry a Greek princess. The affiliative concerns which impelled him to contract that marriage seemed a hoax to her. To punish him for betrayal not just of fidelity but also of commitment, she contrived the murder of several persons including her own children. Her wild fury did not bring her any moral serenity or ethical tranquillity. For all their eventual lack, she proved herself a human being whose veracity in the specific age of her production extends to her efficacy in the general age of her reception.

Herodotus in his *Histories* represented the historic struggle between the Greeks and the Persians. Political as his main concern was, he was not unaware of the distinction that sought to award superiority to the Greeks and inferiority to the orientals. For all the bias that pervaded the social space and the mental landscape, he aimed at a fair and just description. He subscribed to the fact that "the common blood, the common language, the temples and religious ritual, the whole way of life"¹⁷ distinguished the Greeks from the orientals. Veritable and efficacious though this distinction was, it did not render the Greeks superior and the orientals inferior. Intrinsic as it was to the former, ethnic pride was extrinsic to the latter in an equal measure. In the light of all this, Plutarch's charge against him of being "*philobarbaros*, a pro-barbarian or pro-foreigner, hence unpatriotic"¹⁸ was misplaced and ungenerous to say the least.

Edward Said has remained unmindful of the fecundity that self-representation by the Orient vis-a-vis its representation by the West has been registered in the course of time. Only in *Culture and Imperialism* has he made a half-hearted attempt at its delineation. The measure and evidence of the half-heartedness involved may be gathered from the fact that the poetry of W.B. Yeats forwards to him the best paradigm of this self-representation. In a tone marked by eloquence albeit grandiloquence, he defines Yeats as an "indisputably great national poet who during a period of anti-imperialist resistance articulates the experiences, the aspirations and the restorative vision of a

people suffering under the dominion of an offshore power.” (CAI 265-66) How mute albeit dumb is his disapproval of Yeats’s “incoherence and mysticism” is evident from the subverting tone of these sentences: “... his rejection of politics, and his arrogant if charming espousal of fascism ... are not to be excused, not too quickly to be dialecticised into the negative utopian mode. For one can quite easily situate and criticise those unacceptable attitudes of Yeats without changing one’s view of Yeats as a poet of decolonization.” (CAI 278)

To show his contention credible, Said lays emphasis upon the letter that Yeats wrote to Pablo Neruda to express his solidarity with the Spanish Republic. No doubt it was a welcome aspect of Yeats’s incoherence and mysticism. On the score merely of this letter the efficacy of his poetry’s reception cannot however be held identical with that of Neruda. The veracities of poetic production being so specific their differences immediately strike their reading public especially in India. It was the metaphysics and mysticism of the Upanisads that charmed Yeats. Neruda felt outraged at the sight of temples which to the Western mind are the objective correlative of this metaphysics and mysticism put together:

I entered temples, steps of stucco
and gemstones, dirty blood and death,
and bestial priests, inebriated
by the burning stupor, quarreling over
coins rolling over the floor,
while, O minuscule human being,
great idols and phosphoric feet
stuck out vindictive tongues,
or crushed flowers slipped over
a phallus of scarlet stone.¹⁹

Aijaz Ahmad has no illusions on this score. His illusions are nurtured on a score relating not to the past significance but the present meaning of medieval poetry in India. Convinced both of the veracity of production and efficacy of reception of Bhakti kavya, he offers a cogent and candid purview, analytic and evaluative at the same time. He writes, “Bhakti had been associated, on the whole, with an enormous democratization of literary language, had pressed the cultural forms of caste hegemony in favour of the artisanate and the peasantry; had been regionally dispersed on both sides of the Vindhya; was ideologically anti-Brahminical; had deeply problematized the gender con-

struction of all dialogic relations, whether of love or worship or speech itself, and was highly ecumenical in its philosophical inspirations." (IT 273) This was in short the crux of the self-representation by the Orient in India in the pre-British period. In Aijaz Ahmad's view "its cumulative formation as a cluster of regional and even individual specificities which nevertheless was dispensed throughout the land, more or less" has continued in "the twentieth century even more than the nineteenth" (IT 273-74). It seems untenable to hold this in its pristine form because in the British period representation of the Orient in India even by Indian writers under the influence of the West has subalternized it. In his advocacy of the Subaltern Studies in India, Edward Said makes a mystique of it. Is it not the other side of this mystique that gets projected when Aijaz Ahmad overlooks Bhakti kavya's take-over by obscurantist, communal and fundamental forces? So in fact it seems for reasons of existential value to himself and experiential significance to his brethren whose "bewilderment at the extent of the destruction caused"²⁰ is astounding as he has written with regard to Ghalib.

NOTES

1. Edward Said's books include:

Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography (JCFA). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Beginnings: Intention and Method (BIM). New York: Basic Books, 1975.

Orientalism (OR). New York: Pantheon, 1978.

The Question of Palestine (QP). New York: Times Books, 1979.

Covering Islam (CI). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

The World, the Text and the Critic (WTC). Harvard University Press, 1983.

After the Last Sky (ALS). New York: Pantheon, 1986.

Blaming the Victims (BV). London: Verso, 1988.

Musical Elaborations (ME). London: Chatto and Windus, 1992.

Culture and Imperialism (CAI). London: Chatto and Windus, 1993.

Politics of Dispossession (PD). London: Chatto and Windus, 1994.

2. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (IT). London: Verso, 1992.
First Indian Impression 1993.

Ghazals of Ghalib (edited). Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994 (Reprint).

Of late he has published several papers such as "Structure and Ideology in Italian Fascism" in *Germinal* No. 1, 1994 and "Response to Derrida" in *New Left Review* No. 208, 1994. The latter is important for hearkening to new theoretical horizons.

3. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Note Books*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, pp. 382-83.

4. Raymond Williams published "Ours and not Ours", a review of Said's *The World, the Text and the Critic* in *The Guardian* No. 8, March 1984, p. 10. Deeply obliged, Said has written thus in his homage to Raymond Williams in *The Nation* March 5, 1988, p. 312: "I met Williams only twice, both times within the past few years. It was an education for me. I was flattered that he seemed to consider me a colleague and friend. A review he had written of one of my books in the intervening years spoke warmly of my criticism as representing an emergent type of discourse, and there was in all our interaction much sharing and dialogue."

5. *Ibid.*, p. 409.

6. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 53.

7. *Ghazals of Ghalib*, p. xxii.

8. Eric Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* (Newark, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 5.

9. "Foucault and the Imagination of Power" in *The Foucault Reader*, p. 154.

10. *The Dohas of Sheikh Farid*, composed in the first quarter of the thirteenth century comprise an integral part of *Adi Granth*, the sacred scriptures of the Sikhs. Their

immaculate translation into English is available in Sant Singh Sekhon's *A History of Panjabi Literature*, Vol. I (Patiala: Panjabi University Press, 1993).

11. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, composed his *Bani* extensively according to the varying ragas. His *Bani* forms a seminal part of *Adi Granth*. Several Western and Panjabi scholars have translated it into English but without doing it full justice.

12. Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth or the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs*, first published in 1877. The reference is to the third edition published by Munshiram Manohar Lal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1978, p. xcvi. For an analytical study of this issue, reference may be made to my paper "Dr. Ernest Trumpp: A Western Scholar of the *Adi Granth*" presented on 30 April 1994 at the University of Toronto and on 24 December 1994 at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. It is appearing in the forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Sikh Studies*.

13. Plato, *Republic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 132.

14. Aristotle, *Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 296.

15. Victor Ehrenburg, *Alexander and the Greeks* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938), p. 85.

16. Reference may be made to my paper "Treatment of Woman in Euripides", *Panjab Journal of English Studies* Vol. III (1993), pp. 28-36.

17. Herodotus, *The Histories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), p. 550.

18. Quoted in K.H. Waters, *Herodotus, the Historian* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 3.

19. Pablo Neruda, *Canto General* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 379.

20. *Ghalib's Ghazals*, p. xiv.

BOOK REVIEW

Decolonization as Practice

Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India by *Harish Trivedi*;
Calcutta: Papyrus, 1993; 259 pp.; Rs. 200.

Harish Trivedi's book is many things — each with a welcome difference. It is a truly liberated, truly decolonized reading of the extra-ordinary transactions between India and the West, especially English literature. It is deconstruction as purposive practice in service of a value-loaded agenda, as opposed to deconstruction as a totem or as an ensemble of fearsome jargon. Years of acute research and observation have gone into its making, so that its clear-headed arguments move more by the strength of conviction than by a parade of theoretical constructs. Finally, it is one of those rare achievements which prove that criticism can be as absorbing as a fast-pace narrative. We seem to have stopped expecting critical books to be readable, let alone engrossing: while reading *Colonial Transactions* one feels constantly grateful to Harish Trivedi for not having cared to learn the art of being a bore even though he has waded through nearly all of post-structuralism and deconstruction.

Trivedi's perspective on our colonial past is nearly identical to the one governing the recent histories of modern India. The British rule in general and the introduction of the English language as the language of administrative use and government-funded instruction in particular did cause a cultural split in India. The English language split the Indian writer's identity, especially because English literature and language superseded and devalORIZED his classical, Sanskrit and/or Persian or Tamil, inheritance. However, the impact was never as pervasive or unproblematic as is often suggested by influence studies or by the dominance/subordination pattern. All along, India had also been impacting England. Even more important, having been impacted, the Indian writer did not remain passive; he or she negotiated with the impact in varied ways suggestive of transaction and a dialogic process rather than passive reception. The situation in that 'oppressive present' was always far more complex, far more contradictory, than concepts like Orientalism and conquest indicate.

Trivedi isolates some of the most revealing points in the literary history of modern India and subjects them to a contextual, symptomatic and even

deconstructionist reading in order to dis-cover the various cultural and political factors that coalesce round them. His search is for complexity, for no literary event is simple or simply literary.

In relating a rather bizarre episode involving Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore, to which Trivedi returns again and again, each time to discover a new complexity, Trivedi demonstrates that at its least dignified the Indian response to the West could be Occidental, just as the Western response, as in Southey and Moore, T.S. Eliot and even E.M. Forster, could be Orientalist. A devoted friend of Tagore, Thompson wrote two books on Tagore's works in the hope that the West would continue to hold the Indian master in high regard. Ironically, the books caused such an affront to Tagore that not only did he inspire his friends to annihilate them but also, under a pseudonym, he himself wrote a review whose moral was that no Englishman could really appreciate a Bengali poet. The episode is as revealing as Tagore's return of the knighthood following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre or his deathbed repudiation of the West as a civilized space. Although Trivedi's sympathy is with Thompson the victim, he is more interested in showing how underneath Tagore's firm rejection of nationalism and his truly international outlook nationalist, nativist terms continued to persist, surfacing whenever a crisis occurred.

Edward Thompson is vindicated in another trial, the one involving him against E.M. Forster. Two of Thompson's novels, *An Indian Day* (1927) and *A Farewell to India* (1931) are read in contrast to Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). Trivedi finds that compared to Forster, Thompson is far more fair to India, more accurate in his depiction of Indian political realities, and more honest in acknowledging and highlighting the damages to India caused by the British rule. Unlike Forster, Thompson does not subscribe to any stereotypes of Indian sensuality or Indian spirituality. Thompson's liberalism was not passive like Forster's, and if his activist liberalism made Thompson didactic, it, argues Trivedi, was also less sterile, more interventionist than Forster's nebulous 'ideology' of love and good will.

Trivedi 'reopens' two more English writers, Lord Byron and T.S. Eliot, to demonstrate how free the former is from racial biases and how uncaring the latter is towards India or her classical Sanskrit tradition. So different is Lord Byron from several of his contemporaries that Said's attempt to lump them all together sounds simply perverse. Indeed, Trivedi devotes quite some space speculating as to what changes in colonial practices would have occurred only if Byron had lived on both to realize his wish to see India and his consequent plans to participate actively in the proceedings of the House of Lords. Trivedi

acknowledges T.S. Eliot's influence on Indian writers. More than anything else his poems and criticism modernized Indian writing, even though in the latter modernism and progressivism did not fall apart. However, Eliot's interest in India, as revealed by his use of terms from the Upanisads, was most casual, and the terms were picked more for their novelty and obscurity than for their relevance for him. India was the Other not for Byron but for Eliot. So, Orientalism and Occidentalism, sympathy and prejudice, involvement and distance — all figured in the colonial literary transactions.

And, of course, the transactions were dialogic, involving two active sides each of which behaved according to its own needs and compulsions. A number of translations from English into Hindi and from Hindi into English are shown by Trivedi to carry as their subtext the translators' own priorities and biases. The pattern formed by these priorities and biases is then read as an indication of the varied nature of the transactions. There are thus faithful translations, sometimes faithful to the point of lunacy as in Eliot's Good Friday being rendered as *barhiya Shukravaar*, a fine Friday. There are also very, very free transcreations, so that what is foregrounded is Indian needs and compulsions, as in Harivansh Rai Bachchan's *Madhushala* which is a subversive Hinduized, Indianized transcreation of Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Bachchan also translated the *Rubaiyat* but what gained him fame was *Madhushala*. He transcreated the poem not from the original Persian but from English: in India the moment of Persian had passed. Strangely enough, *Madhushala* was itself translated back into English. As such, Trivedi argues that these several versions are important not as routes to the original Omar Khayyam or even to Fitzgerald but to the changing perspectives of literary transactions between India and England. Even during the colonial period, transcreations could be fairly subversive of the original text. An early Hindi rendering of *Comedy of Errors* wickedly adapts Dromio's location of England in the chin of Nell: in Munshi Ratna Chand's translation (1882) England has not been discovered presumably because it lies hidden in the unviewable part! And quite often translation involved critique as well as cross-cultural accommodation.

The third part of the book has two crucial essays, each concerned to show the complexity of our post-colonial situation vis-a-vis English literature. "Reading English, Writing Hindi", an essay breathtaking in its range and passionate in its tone, is a comparative evaluation of creative writers on the one hand and 'canonizers', i.e. academics engaged in teaching and researching English literature, on the other. The former are awarded an O but the 'canonizers' are given a Reappear. The entire history of modern Hindi literature is captured at its crucial transition points to demonstrate that Hindi writers

were on the whole always able to assimilate and honourably utilize English literature and that as soon as they found that English literature had become a literature of exhaustion, they stopped suffering it — focussing instead on literatures elsewhere, including in the Second and Third Worlds. Nirmal Varma, for instance, had translated Milan Kundera into Hindi even before the Anglo-Saxon world had access to him. In contrast, the performance of our syllabus-makers, teachers and researchers in English studies has been worse than unsatisfactory. Even when they subvert the canon, they do so ignoring the local needs and local voices, preferring instead the current fashions and trends in Western campuses. Trivedi's verdict is most unambiguous: "In what [our writers] read and how they write, they are free and liberated; in what we [teachers] teach and how we teach it in the English literature class rooms, we are still slaves." (p. 225)

The concluding essay elaborates the need for what Trivedi calls 'panchadhatu' in the syllabi of English Literature in our universities. English literature is no longer at the centre of world literature. Indian students are bilingual or trilingual. Their appreciation of literature will improve if instead of exposing them only to one-language literature, we ask them to read their own Indian literatures as well as literatures written and translated in English. They will be more sensitive to literature if they are also offered instruction in their classical literatures. Such a recasting of the syllabus will not only make them better Indian students of literature but will also make both us and them post-colonial in the sense of being decolonized. Needless to add, Trivedi is asking for discarding traditional categories such as English Literature and Hindi Literature and replacing them with Comparative Literature. If the courses still have to go under the old names, that need not indicate anything more than some specialization or special thrust.

The issue requires an urgent debate. Many of the 'post-colonial' teachers of English do feel very irrelevant, although it may be optimistic to assume that all such teachers are prepared to learn new books or revive their dormant Sanskrit or Persian; indeed, some may not be prepared to give up 'their' *Great Expectations* and take another colleague's *Culture and Anarchy*. This perhaps tells something about the habits of our heart. Equally revealing of the larger historical context is the fact that most Indian literature departments fear to transact with English departments. Finally, aren't we all supposed to be heading for a future in which our students will go post-colonial and go towards the languages, literatures, and culture of the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Korea, etc.? Isn't this future going to reflect our economic reforms and new cultural forms? Trivedi's book raises many such questions and the fact that

such questions need to be posed and debated explains its great merit and relevance. There is a tremendous concern and good faith behind his blueprint for a new order of literary studies in India. His *panchadhatu* model might very well raise the level of involvement of both students and teachers in the literatures they study or teach. It may also make it possible for several literature departments to cooperate and interact better and more meaningfully, for dialogism is inbuilt in it. Once shaken out of their complacency, English teachers might find studying and teaching more relevant books both exciting and rewarding. As post-colonial teachers, they might suffer less from irrelevance syndromes, especially when they send out in the world truly decolonized graduates.

Jaidev

Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences is a journal brought out by the Inter-University Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. It is a theme based journal and its first volume is on Images of Communities in Modern Indian Literature. As I write this note I am reminded of the text by the volume editor, *The Culture of Pastiche*, reviewed in the last issue of this journal. There the author had voiced a compelling need to distinguish pastiche from mainstream literature which was very deeply linked with history. It was the search for such links that had taken the author repeatedly to experiences of communities depicted in mainstream novels. This journal continues the search from an open platform inviting contributors to invest the word 'community' with as much semantic content as possible. What it gives finally is a prism reflecting a historical reality as well as the predicament of the writer/intellectual in the contemporary context.

The word 'community' in sociology is often associated with two very general concepts. The first is the territorial concept with its contingent location and geographical continuity along with particular structures of authority, of class relations or of political governance within that area. The other is a relational context, based on the quality or character of human relationships without reference to location. In a yet more general sense community is a quality of life, related to a sense of significance and solidarity experienced by its participants. It is in terms of the latter, encompassing the notion of religion, that the issue is addressed in five out of fourteen articles directly, and indirectly in quite a few others. The territorial concept is important in three of the articles dealing with regional novels, while in most of the others the term is defined along social status and predicament. In the course of the articles several other ways of defining the term emerges. M.G. Vassanji, for instance, suggests a distinction between a social set-up and a community in that the latter is marked by a certain degree of closure. Then the distinguishing criteria between one community and another, he states, apart from other factors, is in the hold that the group has on the individual. As far as the dynamics of the community is concerned there seems to be a pull in two different directions, towards commonality and unification on the micro level and differentiations on the macro. However, the differentiation may be operative only on the level of

contingent issues while there may be other macro levels having tangential bearings on the identity of the community. It is at the focus of this complex interplay of relations that the individual in the community finds himself and the literary substance most often, as is evidenced from the articles, is provided by the individual's reaction to the different pulls acting on him on different levels. He may resist them on the micro level or subscribe to them, he might have an ambiguous relation to them or give in to them in the exigencies of the moment and work out the consequences through his life. The situation is somewhat different when the community is defined through the marginality of a people, prostitutes for instance, and it is of historical importance that the community has been so defined in many of the articles. What is implied is that it is seen as a unit bearing the marks of an unjust system and an exploitative power structure and yet the repository of all that is essentially human. Harish Narang's reading of Manto's stories asserts this point of view quite directly, implying a critique of all that is at the centre, valorizing the peripheral over the central. B. Chandrika's article on the widow, Sachidananda's on women in the nineteenth century trying to receive education, and S.R. Jalote's on Dalits in India and the black experience in America also view the community in terms of groups that are marginalized or at least do not form a part of the majority. G. Rajagopal, from another point of view, looks at the representation of non-native minorities in a community, of Bharatidasan's Tamil voice against Aryans.

As we stated above, the notion of the community is in a large number of cases associated with religion and hence calls for a somewhat detailed approach. It is the Hindu and Muslim religion which predominate, with the Sikhs appearing in one, and the experiences are usually crystallized around a major political event, the partition. Needless to say, it is the inter-relationship of the communities at a time of political crisis involving the two communities, that receives focus. Individuals are seen giving in to the pull of the micro against the macro, interspersed perhaps with rapid dazzling moments of contradiction when a Muslim saves a Hindu family or vice versa, the same person having been responsible for numerous other killings. Such moments are of the utmost importance, but they do not wipe out the areas of darkness or negativity in the approach to the community. Bhisam Sahni highlights the issue and asks whether people "should organise themselves on the basis of caste and community (religious) and fight collectively for their rightful demands?" He also gives an answer suggesting that the base of the community should be different, that the just course would be "to unite to fight on the basis of the deprived against the privileged". Inter-community relations through the optics of cross-

community love affairs is also the subject matter of Ayyappa Paniker's article dealing with three Malayalam novels *Martanda Varma*, *Chemmeen* and *Um-machu*. R.K. Jain studies the depiction of the community in Rahi Masoom Raza's *Adha Gaon* focussing on the formation of the Muslim identity in North India, its contours evolving with definite political events through time. He sometimes juxtaposes the text with Renu's *Maila Anchal* studying the effects of an interaction between great and little traditions or the lack of it on a community. Then there is Sudhir Kumar who reads a reconstruction of the nation in the fiction of Muslim writers. In Raza's novel *Topi Shukla* he finds a strong plea for "the de-differentiation of humanity", but the nuances, as he himself suggests, are more complex. There is a large scale reference to India and Indianness, but also a warning against a possible misuse of the concept of the nation as a dominant structure using historical or cultural texts to further its hegemonic goals. The other novel discussed in this article is Abdul Bismillah's *Jhini Jhini Bini Chadaria*. We hear a different voice in Rupinderjit Saini's article "From Harmony to Holocaust: A Study of Community Relations in the Partition Novels". It is a critique of the partition novel which, the author shows, often creates a myth of communities living in harmony. At a certain point this harmony is disrupted by an external factor and is transformed into violence. The author views this in terms of an erasure on the part of the novelist who refuses to see the underlying prejudices present at any given moment in a particular community — Hindu, Muslim, Sikh — against another. The erasure is partially explained with reference to the demands of an artistic form but it also suggests, she feels, "a national inability to introspect, analyse and face up to a most intractable problem of our political, social and cultural life". While some of the articles in this journal itself make it clear that prejudices do not always go unnoticed, the critique should also be recognized for what it is, a plea to both activists and academics to look deeper and to confront reality. It is a differing voice trying to re-focus issues.

The dynamics of the community centred around its festivals as presented in Satinath Bhaduri's *Dhorai Charit Manas* is the subject of Ipshta Chanda's article. She reconstructs details leading to the forging of a political community using the semiotic bases of a marginal community. A second article by J.K. Nayak and H.S. Mohapatra traces the individual who is not contained within the limits of the traditional community in H.E. Beal's *Indian Ink*, Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Mamu* and Gopinath Mohanty's *Danapani*. While the individual in the novels is a sorry figure although rapacious, modern, often wily, the community is represented in Beal as compromising, vulnerable and in Mohanty as devitalized. In Senapati the community intervenes in different forms

etching out structures of “subtle, indestructible integrity” and “networks of relationships with a life of their own”. Community here is associated with the rural and the oral, and its decomposition along with the rise of the goal-oriented individual attributed to the impact of colonialism. The novel as genre is referred to as the site where the process of transformation is worked out.

M.G. Vassanji in his article “Community as a Fictional Character” writes about literary strategies adopted by him in writing community novels. From quite a different perspective E.V. Ramakrishnan writes on different literary movements in Malayalam during the twentieth century. He does not mention the community but he presents the changing relation of the writer to his reader and to his work. In other words, he studies the role of the writer as a member of a community of readers, or of a community at large, through several decades.

A rich dialectic of community consciousness as value and as site of conflict, as idealism and reality emerges from a holistic reading of the journal. In its wake it problematizes notions of modernization, urbanization and sometimes the very process of writing the community. By way of conclusion, I will permit myself to speculate on an absence, one which in no way diminishes the rich content of the given, but which could have been there as an adjunct to all that is present. I refer to the absence of the immediate urban middle class experience of the community except in terms of religion. Can we read this as a partial erasure of the idea of the community somewhere and a relegation of it to a distance, of time and place as well as predicament? Or can it be explained with reference to a sociological difference between mechanical and organic communities, that those in urban, middle class situations are mechanical while those in rural societies organic and hence valorized over the former? However, it is not quite true that there are only mechanical communities in the metropolis, for there are and there can be new human relationships of “shared and contested meanings”, values and goals in urban, technological contexts. The meaning of transpersonal commitment in the wake of commodified human relations of educated middle-class individuals in India’s towns and cities is an issue that calls for an involved engagement. The background for such a task has been well-established in this volume of *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*.

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